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IN THIS ISSUE

Integrating Faith and Learning

The Power of Story

Can Teaching *Math* Be Ministry?

Integrating Faith across Disciplines

Advancing the Ministry
of New Teachers

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Departments

- 182 From Where I Sit**
Bringing Sunday and Monday
Together
Jonathan Barz
- 226 Administrative Talk**
The Emotionally Literate Principal
Glen Kuck
- 228 Children at Worship**
A Place in the Choir
Susan Wente
- 230 DCE Expressions**
Gender Inclusiveness
Davina Robbins
- 233 Multiplying Ministries**
Ups and Downs
Rich Bimler
- 234 Secondary Sequence**
The Flip Side of Instructional
Strategies
Jeffrey Daley
- 237 Teaching the Young**
Can Children Play?
Shirley Morgenthaler
- 239 A Final Word**
Simple Gifts
George Heider

In This Issue: Integrating Faith and Learning

- 184 The Power of Story: The Study of Literature as a Springboard to the Faith Journey We Take with Our Students**
Serious study of literature, Thurber states, can lead students to thoughtful consideration of our human condition in a fallen world and our need for a Savior. The tension for the Christian teacher is to represent faithfully the literary work of art and, at the same time, assist students as they encounter world views in stark contrast to the Christian values we desire them to embrace.
by Daniel Thurber
- 192 Can Teaching *Math* Be Ministry?**
Certain disciplines (mathematics being a prime example) do not seem to offer opportunities for integrating faith and learning, but Carter argues that all—even math—present opportunities for ministry, both in the broader sense of ministry as Christian vocation, anything one does in faith to God and service to others, and in the more specific sense of ministry as proclamation of Law and Gospel.
by Rich Carter
- 200 Mathematics and the Trinity: Integrating Faith across Disciplines**
Mathematics, Mangels concedes, is not easily used to explain spiritual concepts. Nevertheless, he demonstrates through the mathematical concept of set theory how one can model religious ideas within the disciplines, engaging students in discussions of biblical doctrines and faith issues.
by Kenneth Mangels
- 206 Advancing the Ministry of New Teachers**
No one part of teaching is very complicated, Moulds says. What's difficult is coordinating all the parts simultaneously. Reporting conclusions gleaned from conversations with new teachers during Summer Summits conducted at Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska, Moulds outlines ten specific challenges or pressures which create problems for beginning teachers.
by Russell Moulds
- 215 Keeping the Faith**
“How does a teacher weave together the academic and the spiritual to touch the world in which a child lives?” Prange asks. Drawing on her fifteen years of classroom experience, Prange presents some concrete examples of how teachers can integrate faith concepts into content instruction.
by Sherry Prange
- 220 God's Care in Times of Crisis: The School's Response**
The authors present a program to equip schools to respond to times of crisis in ways which meet human needs effectively and demonstrate an attitude of Christian care and concern for all involved.
by Richard Armstrong, Anna Eissfeldt, and Carrie Weiss

From Where I Sit

By Jonathan M. Barz, Editor

Marva Dawn, writing a decade ago in the pages of *Lutheran Education*, expressed beautifully the ideal of Christian education as practiced in Lutheran schools: "One of the main reasons that I so much love our Lutheran schools is that they offer the ideal setting for bringing Sunday and Monday together. In the integrated spirituality of the teachers in those schools, the students can see models of holistic and unfragmented Christian life, practicing the presence of God in all the aspects of one's human existence. In the spirituality of their Christian environment, pupils can experience God's presence in all their subjects and activities" (110). This paragraph bears close reading as we consider the focus of this issue of *Lutheran Education*, integrating faith and learning.

What Dawn describes is indeed what Lutheran schools and teachers at their best accomplish, presenting students with winsome "models of holistic and unfragmented Christian life." No doubt many of us owe our vocation as Christian teachers today to the inspiring example of "integrated spirituality" embodied in a faithful teacher, pastor, or DCE. At the same time, I must admit that my own experience in Lutheran schools at all levels, both as teacher and as student has often failed to live up to the ideal Dawn articulates. The classrooms I've occupied and over which I've presided, I confess, have not always been places where students, day in and day out, "experience God's presence in all their subjects and activities."

Some of the cause of this failure must be ascribed to our human weakness, of course, but where there is a gap between the ideal and the reality of Lutheran education, I think it can often be traced to one of two other sources: one conceptual, the other more concrete.

In the first case, there are those who genuinely doubt that such integration even needs to be considered an ideal. Motivated in some instances, I'm afraid, by the pragmatic fear of alienating students who have enrolled seeking only a good private school education rather than out of a desire for a Christian education, some have chosen to de-emphasize this most central aspect of the mission of the Lutheran school.

Others, particularly at higher levels of Lutheran education, have assumed a conflict between integration of Christian faith and the pursuit of excellence in academics. Some (often citing Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms, the earthly kingdom of the left hand and the heavenly kingdom of the right) have argued that we are free to approach any discipline or area of learning without attempting to Christianize it by imposing a "veneer" of religiosity over it. Those

who would seek to bring the Gospel to bear on all areas of learning may be accused of naive fundamentalism or arrogant triumphalism.

There is, of course, an element of truth in this position. God's creation is certainly worthy of our attention in its own right, apart from any spiritual lessons or analogies we might be able to draw from it. Christian faith requires no retreat into "otherworldliness." We are to be citizens simultaneously of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world.

The great danger of ignoring the integration of faith into the subject areas, however, is that we encourage an already too common compartmentalization of faith and life, losing the dynamic tension between the two kingdoms which brings our Christian commitments to bear on all aspects of life and learning. In this case, the Lutheran school runs the risk of becoming merely a private school with chapel and religion class. Sunday and Monday remain fragmented.

But even given the firm conviction that a Lutheran school *ought* to be a place in which faith and learning are continually, inextricably integrated, it is not always clear how one goes about accomplishing that goal. How, to take a particularly difficult example, does Christian faith inform the teaching of math, a purely analytical discipline? Surely there's no such thing as "Christian math." Two essays in this issue explore the integration of faith in this area. Kenneth Mangels, a mathematics educator, explores the more concrete side of this question, offering a model of how

a mathematical concept can be used to explore one of the mysteries of Christian faith. In a more theoretical vein, Rich Carter discusses mathematics as a test case, invoking Luther's thoughts on Christian vocation in order to argue that *all* teaching can indeed be ministry.

A final element of Dawn's description of the (ideal) Lutheran school deserves attention. Speaking fondly of the schools of her youth, she recalls "the spirituality of their Christian environment." A school's environment, of course, encompasses much more than what happens in its classrooms. One might profitably ask, then, to what extent are all areas of school life marked by a conspicuous "spirituality"?

Is it evident in how discipline is administered? Is it evident in the way all staff members—not only teachers but custodians, secretaries, cooks, etc.—are treated with dignity and respect? Is it evident in all interactions between faculty and administration, between pastor and school—in the servant heart of each? Is it evident in the way sports and other extracurricular activities are conducted? Is it evident in the way all those who are hurting find comfort and support within the school community?

The vision of the Lutheran school Dawn holds out is a lofty one, one which no doubt all schools and teachers fail to achieve at times. But I thank God for His work in and through our schools, providing power and guidance as we strive to bring Sunday and Monday together and granting forgiveness for the many times we fail.†

The Power of Story: Literature as a Springboard to the Faith Journey We Take with Our Students

Dr. Daniel Thurber serves as Professor of English and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska. He has been teaching for thirty-one years and holds a doctorate in English Language and Literature from the University of Michigan. He has served as a visiting professor in England and has led numerous study tours to the United Kingdom. In 1997, he received the Outstanding Teaching Award from Concordia, Seward.

Of the many daunting responsibilities one generation must fulfil for the next, perhaps none is more compelling than deciding what stories to tell. For it is by our stories that we remind one other who we are and what life is all about. By our stories, we address questions of identity and purpose. Each generation of parents, of adults, of nurturers of our youth, in every society, in every cultural setting, faces this critical task. For if the young do not know who they are and of what they are a part, how will they know what is to be valued and of what to be cautious as their earthly journey unfolds? The power of story, the importance of story.

Thus, we are all storytellers, in a most significant sense. It is this sense of how intimately the concept of story is interwoven with the daily living of our lives that provides an entry point for teachers of literature in our Lutheran schools—all who seek to undertake the academic journey within the context of our faith journey with our students.

In the thirty years since graduating from Concordia, Seward, I have had the privilege of introducing students

at the high school and college levels to the delights of literary study. Along with that privilege has come the challenge or “tension” that perhaps every teacher of literature in our Lutheran schools faces: how to represent fully and faithfully the literary work of art for the fullest aesthetic enjoyment by the student—and, at the same time, assist the students as they encounter world views, philosophies of life, and religious attitudes that seem to be in stark contrast to the Christian values we desire our students to embrace and live.

From my experiences, I offer some thoughts regarding how a serious study of literature can lead students to thoughtful consideration of the realities of our human condition in a fallen world and our need for a Savior. Literature can illuminate the needs, behavior, and consequences of decisions and actions. It can highlight our frailties, our aspirations, the limitations of human potential, and our need for deliverance.

In the end, the list of questions that writers explore is perhaps not a lengthy one, and the questions are those of identity and purpose: “Who are you?” “Who am I?” “What is the nature of my relationship and obligation to you?” “Is there a God?” “If there is, then . . . ?” “If there is not, then . . . ?” “Yes, but what if there is?” Of course, these questions can appear in different forms. Sometimes they are explicitly raised in the lives of the characters; at other times, they are implicitly addressed.

An idea expressed in a literature course from my undergraduate days long ago put it this way: “Every writer who would be significant must eventually get around to the concept of original sin.” I’ve thought often of this statement over the years, and have shared it frequently with my students.

Perhaps the idea behind the statement is that a writer who would give us recognizable portraits of the human condition likely will have to confront the question of what humans can do about their predicaments. When we as readers observe the behaviors and choices of the characters in a novel, encounter the attitudes and reflections of the narrative voice, and sense the approval or disapproval of these choices and attitudes by the human author who has created this imaginative depiction of life, we may sense the “informing philosophy” of the writer.

Sometimes, we may sense this informing philosophy to be that people can adjust their circumstances, can create a better world, can improve from generation to generation — if only they can construct the appropriate economic, political and social structures for themselves. In other words, they have the potential to rescue themselves. In other works of literature, we may sense the informing philosophy to be that people will inflict the same hurts on self and others generation after generation, give in to the same temptations, go down the same dead-end streets—no matter

how “advanced” or “civilized” their generation is proclaimed to be. They will not be able to rescue themselves; they will need a deliverer, a Savior.

Without overgeneralizing, it can indeed become apparent how a writer interprets and regards human life.

If one reads several works by a given author, it is often possible to sense whether or not that writer accepts or rejects the concept of original sin.

Either the depiction of the human condition suggests that we can rescue ourselves and that we live in a world capable of moral improvement, or the depiction of the human condition

suggests that we live in a fallen world, are born into sin, and cannot save ourselves.

Thus, the study of literature in the classroom can draw our attention in poignant ways to the critical importance of the Gospel. It can call our attention to wrenching portraits of people in despair, looking for purpose and meaning to their lives. It can confront us with individuals arrogant and self-absorbed, rejecting what faith invites them to accept. It can

contrast for us lives lived for self and lives lived in faithfulness to God’s plan for fulfillment.

Our students’ relationship with language as they encounter it in literary texts is a fascinating one. As I begin a

new semester with my students in a literature course, I remind them of their powerful role as readers. Sometimes, students will begin the course assuming their role as readers to be a relatively passive one, similar to that of a sponge: simply absorbing or soaking up what the writer has created in words. The temptation is to see the writer as solely

the creative one in this transaction— and the reader perhaps as solely a laid-back recipient.

To counteract this impression, I urge my students to see their role as a distinctly creative one, as well. I remind them that the words lie there dormant on the page until we as readers encounter them in the act of reading. The reader is the one who gives life to the words, which lie there “dead” on the page until the reader reads them. To give life is a

Along with that privilege has come the “tension” that every teacher of literature in our Lutheran schools faces: how to represent fully and faithfully the literary work of art for the fullest aesthetic enjoyment by the student—and, at the same time, assist the students as they encounter world views that seem to be in stark contrast to the Christian values we desire our students to embrace and live.

remarkably creative act. I remind the students further that “the words can only say; they cannot say what they mean. It is the reader who says what the words mean.” I encourage my students to notice how they do that, to notice “how they make meaning”—because to notice how we make meaning of the pages we read in literature can provide us valuable insight into how we make meaning of the larger text of everyday life, of which we turn a new page each day.

To reinforce the concept of the powerful role of the reader, I invite my students to notice another dynamic at work when we read. When we read, the story of our lives intersects the story we are reading. We bring all that has been our story to this point in time to the doorstep of the story we are about to read, and this will influence, in conscious and unconscious ways, the meaning we will attach to what we read. Thus, in real and overarching ways, “story” becomes the bridge between the reality of our lives and the literary world into which we step.

As this bridging experience occurs, I want my students to be very attentive to what they are thinking and feeling as they read. I urge them to have always a pen or pencil in hand, making frequent notes to themselves in the margins of the text. In monitoring their cognitive and emotional responses to the text, they are, in part, focusing on the intersection of their life story with the story of the literary work of art. I suggest to them that the most precious time of literary

study is when their minds encounter the mind of the writer, one on one — a truly intimate experience. I tell them that nothing we will do in class the next day is more important than what happened to them as they read the story the night before. I will try to be helpful and ask them: “I wonder if you’ve noticed this?” or “What do you think about that?” or “Have you considered this?” But, in the end, the “making of meaning” is a personal and precious sustained moment for our students—and it occurs in the act of reading.

From this concept, we can then introduce the matter of perspective; that is, “*how* we see determines *what* we may see.” Our perspective can serve to illuminate, or to dim, what is to be seen. In our faith journey through this life, for example, it’s not “seeing is believing”; rather, it’s “believing is seeing.”

The dynamic of perspective operates in several ways as we read a story: (a) we notice how the characters view their circumstances, and thus we sense their perspectives; (b) we notice how the narrator appears to regard character choices and values, and thus we sense her/his perspective; (c) we notice our own perspectives as readers, absorbing character actions and narrator attitudes within our own accumulated experience and outlook. How we “see” a text, i.e., how we “read” a text, is intimately related to the activity of the “making of meaning,” which is our primary privilege and role as readers.

Rewarding and meaningful discussions can occur in the classroom of a Lutheran school when in the illumination of the Gospel the merits and shortcomings of the variety of perspectives encountered in the literary text can be critiqued. In fact, it may be especially in such classrooms, led by teachers of Christian values, that philosophies and beliefs antithetical to Christianity can be seen for what they are. The Christian teacher has distinct opportunity to help students see the message of the Gospel in its full and compelling urgency for a sin-weary and self-absorbed world.

One of the most powerful and engaging novels ever written is Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Written in the 1860s, it is representative of great literature in that it speaks poignantly to each succeeding generation of readers. In terms of the issues it addresses, it seems almost as if it could have been written last night. I have taught this novel often to juniors and seniors in high school, as well as first year students in college. It provides an excellent example of significant literature serving as a springboard to thoughtful discussions of faith and life.

It is the story of an impoverished university student in St. Petersburg, Russia, at a time of considerable social change and tension. We first meet Raskolnikov in his "tiny cupboard" size apartment on a sweltering day in July. In the opening pages of the novel, we note

that everything about him connects to the weight of oppressiveness: the oppressive heat, the confined conditions of his living quarters, and most of all, the weight of anguish he feels regarding his poverty. He slips out surreptitiously from his apartment house, in order to avoid seeing his landlady—for he never seems to have the money to pay his rent. He has been making frequent trips to an old pawnbroker in the area, receiving paltry sums of money from her for the items he has brought.

In his growing resentment of her, he begins to rationalize and plan what he considers a quite justifiable action: he will kill the old woman, take her money and use it to fund his studies and provide for his needs. He rationalizes that society does not need this "louse," this woman who profits from the misery of others—but that society does need the leadership and intellectual talents that he possesses, if only he can finish his university degree. Thus begins the story of an individual who tests his theory that laws in a society are meant for the mass of "ordinary" people, while every now and then an "extraordinary" individual comes along who has the "right" to transgress if only he exhibits the courage to do so.

The killing of the pawnbroker, however, for all of his careful planning, does not go at all as he had anticipated. Shortly after this first killing, the pawnbroker's half-sister Lizaveta appears quite unexpectedly as he is trying to obtain the old woman's key to the money

box. In a fit of emotion, he commits a second killing. These plot level events occur very early in the story, at about page 70 (Bantam Classic edition) of an over five hundred page novel. Thus, the “crime” of Raskolnikov may be said to have taken place in a relatively short portion of the literary work of art, leaving more than 4/5 of the novel to focus on the “punishment” of Raskolnikov.

I pose the question for my students: because the totally unexpected second killing does occur, what kind of novel can Dostoevsky now write, as distinct from what he may have written if only the first, carefully rationalized, killing had taken place? Further, I ask my students to ponder when and how exactly do they believe the “crime” of Raskolnikov to have occurred. Was it the moments when he swung the ax and killed—or did it occur much earlier than that? What themes, issues, and observations about the human condition does he seem interested in calling to our attention?

I tell my students that if the novel was solely about someone committing two killings and the attendant shock for us as readers, I would not ask them to invest the reading time and the making of meaning for more than five hundred pages of novel. Rather, I encourage them to notice the insistent questions Dostoevsky appears to be raising, regarding definitions, causes, and consequences of such matters as “crime,” “punishment,” “suffering,” and

“poverty.”

As well, he is keenly interested in the “children” in society. The image of “child” appears frequently in the novel, most prominently at key plot level events. We are asked to define “children” in society, and ponder that perhaps it is not simply a chronological delineation. We are asked to reflect on who are the “children” among us, how society treats them and why, and with what consequences.

Two other very key characters in the novel are Porfiry, the detective, and Sonia, the teenage girl drawn into prostitution to provide money for a mother dying of tuberculosis, impoverished sisters and brothers, and a drunken father, who regularly steals money from her purse to foster his drinking habit. Porfiry becomes quite curious about Raskolnikov, and in his experienced detective manner, circles ever nearer and nearer to him. Sonia has a strong faith in God, and this is her constant source of strength as she faces the events of her young life.

Space does not permit me to go into very much of the fascinating, gripping series of plot level events that draw us as readers into this story and propel us with steadily escalating momentum as the novel proceeds. However, of the many ironies at work in the narrative is the fact that Lizaveta was the closest friend of Sonia, and it is Lizaveta’s necklace cross which Sonia wears. When Sonia realizes that it is Raskolnikov who has killed

Lizaveta, her reaction demonstrates the centrality of her Christian faith. Her first comments to him are “What have you done—what have you done to yourself?” and “There is no one—no one in the whole world now so unhappy as you” (354). Sonia effectively has separated the sin from the sinner. Even more compelling to her than the loss of her closest friend is her concern for the lost sinner that Raskolnikov has shown himself to be.

For much of the story, Raskolnikov resists and mocks Sonia’s faith—yet he is intrigued about how it provides such meaning and strength for her. He is fascinated with the story of the raising of Lazarus. Following her reading of it, what may be the symbolic high point of the novel occurs: “‘That is all about the raising of Lazarus,’ she whispered. . . . The candle-end was flickering out in the battered candle-stick, dimly lighting up in the poverty-stricken room the murderer and the harlot who had so strangely been reading together the eternal book. Five minutes or more passed” (285).

Within our curriculum of study, we must help our students to remember, to always remember, that the Word, God’s Word, continues to be the only truly revolutionary text for a sin-weary and self-centered world. The energizing influence of the Word must unify our various areas of study. Otherwise, our academic disciplines—and our very lives—remain only shallow discoveries of our identities.

For many readers, this is indeed the symbolic high point of the novel, for it leads into the poignant way in which the reader’s “story” and the novel’s “story” touch. For, in the end, who among us is not in that room—when we remind ourselves that in the human community there are other ways to kill one another besides physically and other ways to prostitute oneself besides sexually? Metaphors of the “poverty-stricken room” as our world and dimmed

possibilities of sight and perspective, apart from that which Scripture provides, contribute to the portrait scene of Raskolnikov and Sonia as a microcosm of the world in which we all live.

As we sense the highly important questions and issues with which Dostoevsky has confronted us, discussion of this

novel leads in compelling ways to matters of purpose and identity. Such matters are inevitably part of one’s faith journey, highlighted for the student and now made parallel with the academic journey occurring in the discussion of

The Power of Story

Crime and Punishment.

Readers of this novel sense the relevance of its themes for our society in the late twentieth century. Dostoevsky has created characters with traits and outlooks that we recognize in our own time as well; he has focused on issues of life and death, the value and meaning of human life, and the treatment of old and young. He has called our attention to questions of morality and justice that we recognize in the social issues of our day. Perhaps above all, Dostoevsky has reminded us of the devastation of lives lived apart from Christ, the need for forgiveness, and the strength of God's love as it manifests itself in the lives of believers.

To read a novel is to read words: words chosen and arranged by human authors to engage us cognitively and emotionally, words to focus our attention on certain truths of the human condition as that writer sees them. In the Christian classroom, we remind ourselves that there are *words*—but there is also *the Word*! The Word of Truth, the Word of Life, the Word of Love, the Word of Reclamation, the Word of Forgiveness, the Word that is the Way, the Word that is Forever. We encounter the text of

human words within the context of *the Word*, which is our Way and is our Life, through faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Within our curriculum of study, we must help our students to remember, to always remember, that the Word, God's Word, continues to be the only truly revolutionary text for a sin-weary and self-centered world. The energizing influence of the Word must unify our various areas of study. Otherwise, our academic disciplines—and our very lives—remain only shallow discoveries of our identities.

The power of story. The importance of story. For it is by our stories that we remind one another who we are and what life is all about. In the end, only one Word will remain. For the children of God, we encounter story within the Story that is Truth. For it is by this Story that we remind one another Whose we are and what Life is all about.†

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Can Teaching *Math* Be Ministry?

Rich Carter has been teaching at Concordia, St. Paul, since 1991 and coordinates the Pre-Seminary Program there. His professional journey has included fourth grade teaching in New York City and seminary teaching in Nigeria and Russia. He holds masters degrees from Concordia, River Forest, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Yale, and the ThD from Luther Seminary in St. Paul. A certified DCE, Rich's last article was "Christ and Culture" for DCE Directions.

As a matter of integrating faith and Lutheran education, can teaching math be ministry?

Some definitions might be useful as we begin this exercise. As to math, I mean a full range of things, the calculating, the concepts, the relationships and patterns found in this discipline, things that range from number recognition and Cuisenaire rods to matrices and "x," all the things my son currently studies as a math and computer science major in college. As to teaching, I think of the whole array of learning activities one can lead, from lecture through small group discussion to service learning projects. For the word "integrating," synonyms that come to mind include correlating, connecting, and synthesizing.

Two meanings of "ministry" are at work in this article: ministry as service, and ministry as making known the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The former meaning derives from the New Testament concept *diakonia*, visible in the English words "deacon" and "deaconess." *Diakonia* is what servants do, service. The other meaning appears in the Augsburg Confession: ministry is God's activity making sure that justifying faith is proclaimed (Augsburg Confession, V:1). The word "faith" is a focal point of this article. Justifying faith in Christ makes it possible to interpret all levels and sorts

Can Teaching Math Be Ministry?

of Lutheran education, including teaching math, as ministry.

Something about teaching math is simply a matter of everyday life.¹ May God grant parents who begin the process already in infancy, helping children with their ones and twos and threes. Going shopping and playing games are opportunities for teaching numbers, as well as other topics. Cross cultural awareness awaits also in math: what does it mean for everyday life that in the Ibibio language of southeastern Nigeria the vocable for six is “five-plus-one,” for seven is “five-plus-two,” etc.?

Numbering and the manipulation of numbers might be only common life. However, we may see them as service. Teaching these things to the next generation at home, in school, or in the marketplace, we may see as ministry. People serve by equipping others to live with and within the structures we seem to have invented for our lives, mirrors perhaps for the structure(s) of creation itself. We are deaconesses and deacons one to another.

What we have said so far of common life as service or ministry may be applied to teaching math or teaching music or even to changing diapers. This word “service” might be used of all humanity without saying a religious word. However, the Divine Word enables Christians to interpret all such service as God’s work. If we believe that God has created us and all that exists, then we believe that all good service is in some

way God’s doing. To make such an interpretation is the prerogative and responsibility of the Church school. The Christian school is free—is committed!—to teach that all of common life can be valued as God’s gift, whether participants recognize it that way or not. That Cyrus did not know God was no barrier to God working through Cyrus (Is. 44:24-45:7).

In *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life*, Robert Benne (1988) argues that faith is a matter of discerning: in Christ we see. Consider various visions of math. Along with the whole world Christians see numbers and calculations. (In this sense, there is no “Christian math.”) With some in the world Christians see the wonder of these numbers, the patterns and relationships and calculations: what the human mind can do is amazing! But there’s more. By faith Christians can see the mystery of this wonder, that this is all God’s doing. This is something of our peculiar service in Lutheran education, teaching not just the wonders of the world, but the mystery that this math—or music or language or sport—is God’s.

The preceding paragraph reflects a Lutheran doctrine of vocation, of calling. As Benne explains, God calls all people into the tasks of daily life to serve the neighbor. The tasks may be recognized conveniently in the categories of marriage and family life, public life, work, and church. What is not recognized easily, but can be discerned

by faith in Christ, is that *God* calls all to the tasks, and that we may enjoy our service as service with God.

If you have graded too many math papers or seen too many disappointing test scores, you may argue that this view of teaching math (or music or religion or English) is much too romantic or cheerful. It is not. It takes the tough work of teaching seriously. It takes such work seriously because in it God works. When human muscles flex, whether physical ones or mental or emotional ones, God is working.

This reality of *our* calling as *God's* calling, *our* working as *God's* working, challenges us to support better those among us who have work that

is particularly difficult. They have "that" class this year in the elementary school. They teach the general education course in your discipline while you revel in the seminars with students who have chosen the major. How can we serve, doing God's work for them, while they have a particularly tough part of God's work to do?

That a doctrine of vocation values all good human work as God's work does not deny the reality of evil. Students cheat; teachers may be lazy. Teachers may be overbearing, rude, or mean;

students may bring a knife or gun.

According to a Lutheran doctrine of vocation, looking at tasks in daily life begins with confidence in God in Christ. Because *this* God is working, the God who has won the battle in the tomb, we have increased freedom to acknowledge evil. It is not the last word.

As in our common life we serve, we minister, and faith discerns God working in that ministry, so also in teaching math. Math and all disciplines,

including religious instruction, are by their very nature as disciplines matters of order, of law. In the human adventure, we have imposed or evoked a structure of life. Something like Adam naming animals, we name

this life that God has given. We name not simply the child God gives, in family or in classroom. We name the cosmos, even each new comet as it comes and each new invention of the (God working) human mind. Have I understood math correctly? Some parts of our cosmos are so orderly that we can name them by numbers. Some relationships (such as π) are so consistent that we can quantify them. In raising this subject of order, of law, we can think also of government, of the laws by which we live in society and classroom, and the laws by which we are

This is something of our peculiar service in Lutheran education, teaching not just the wonders of the world, but the mystery that this math—or music or language or sport—is God's.

stopped for a ticket when speeding to school. “Here we maintain that the law was given by God first of all to restrain sins by threats and fear of punishment and by the promise and offer of . . . favor” (Smalcald Articles, III ii:1). All classroom learning comes under law: the threat of an F and the reward of an A are not grace. *Salvation* in Christ comes by grace, but *education* comes by works of the law, of the disciplines in which we teach.

One could pause here: it is the gift of Lutheran schooling at every level to articulate what cannot be said in so many other settings, namely, that God is at work. The particular acts of service and very structures in which we serve are God’s lawful, orderly way of working in the world.² The chapel and religious instruction for which we are sometimes apologetic (Is a Lutheran school only a public school plus chapel and religion class?) are resources by which we offer this discerning view of math, of school, of life. By means of chapel and religious instruction—and hallway conversation and faculty meetings and parent meetings—we may post a construction sign over every Christian classroom, every discipline: “God at work.”

The last paragraph is only a pause because in the document cited Luther takes us farther. “The chief function or power of the law is to make original sin manifest and show man to what utter depths his nature has fallen and how corrupt it has become” (Smalcald

Articles, III ii:4). Every act of math, every act of service in the structures of human life, has this potential: to be our confrontation with God’s law, with our own sin. (Warning: *this* Lutheran education applies to teachers as well as students.) Common life, including teaching math, may be the occasion for recognizing sin, whether one earns or gives A’s or F’s. (Common life is also a location for proclaiming Gospel, but that point comes later.)

Far-fetched? I would hardly argue that we naturally and eagerly see our sins (whether the “our” refers to students or teachers) in common life, but that is exactly where they occur. Listen to Luther when he discusses confession in the Small Catechism. “Which are these [sins we should confess]? Here consider your station according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant”—or teacher of math.

Perhaps we could make the same argument from a different angle. Into what life did God have to come to redeem us from our sin? Christmas celebrates our Lord’s entrance into common life: he was born “under the law.” “Why lies he in such mean estate?” It is just here, in our common life, that we sin. Amid the straw of Bethlehem and the discs of the computer age, between manipulations and irrational numbers, here by the law God can “make original sin manifest and show man to what utter depths his nature has fallen” (Small Catechism, V: 19-20).

Here I must note that ministry does not happen by itself, through the materials, through the “course content” of math or even of religion. God has so designed the ministry of the Gospel that it is done by people, beginning with His own Son. Will we so invest ourselves personally in ministry, in service, that even report cards might become opportunities for ministry, for proclaiming Gospel? To be sure, put a Bible verse on the cover of the report card. Much more, use the occasion of grading to consider again our life in God’s world and work.

I am cautious here. To ask that teaching be considered as an occasion for law, for exposing sin, can sound like asking for one more

item on the job description. There are few teachers at any level who need another task. “Oh, yeah, besides grading papers and putting up bulletin boards I’m supposed to do something else.” I am not asking for something “else.” I am asking that teaching math—or

music or philosophy or English or German or whatever the subject—be taken as the occasion for ministry. The integration of faith and teaching comes not in the material but in the interaction,

The integration of faith and teaching comes not in the material but in the interaction, in the relationship in which one in Lutheran education makes it safe for another to be clear, “This is my shortcoming. This is my sin.” If we will not do this, no teaching, even of religion, can be ministry.

in the relationship in which one in Lutheran education makes it safe for another to be clear, “This is my shortcoming. This is my sin.” If we will not do this, no teaching, even of religion, can be ministry.³ Will we practice this attitude, this habit, with one another? Will we submit ourselves to Law, to the counsel and conversation of colleagues, of a pastor, so that we see our sin? Will we ourselves so hone this seeing of the sin, this submission before the Gospel, so practiced in our chapel services and religion classes, that we can serve in ministry?

Why such a delight over sin in our teaching work? The delight is not in sin, but in seeing sin under the law.

Lutherans have long argued that only in the context of Law can one hear Gospel. We can delight in the conversations and confrontations by which we meet our sin and help others to do the same, because then and only then can we hear the Gospel. It is that

Gospel we are free—and committed!—to serve through our schools, at all levels and in all disciplines.

Second pause. Chapel and religious instruction, I proposed, give us

Can Teaching Math Be Ministry?

opportunity to set up “God at work” construction signs. They also give the time, space and relationships to articulate this lawful truth that applies to our teaching, to the whole school day. We can post another sign: “The accusation you feel is God’s.” Chapel and religious instruction—itself a discipline!—give us tools to teach God’s law, to equip ourselves and our students to discern God restraining sin, rewarding civil righteousness and exposing our fallen nature. It may be that religion or the humanities allow a more articulate expression of the human experience to which the Law applies—which experience God’s Law clarifies as sin—but that human experience is no less real in teaching math. The ministry of chapel and religious instruction sharpens our vision for Law for the whole day, for the whole person, for teacher to teacher relationships as much as for children’s behavior on the playground.

So, now, the Gospel. When we have cultivated relationships and clarified our experience under Law, we are in the time and place and relationships to hear and speak Gospel. Sins are forgiven: yours, mine, theirs. In Christ we have all been died for. For this very reason, because death is at work among us, our chaos challenges God’s order—for this very reason God proclaims in Christ the end of death. That is my first word to you, in this last place in this article. Better said, it is God’s chief word and proper work

for us all. And then, in ministry, it is God’s Word through us to those we serve. In each time and place and relationship God grants, as we tend to the lawful experience of a sister or brother, student or colleague, we may speak this Gospel, because God has given it, God has served us.

Perhaps far-fetched again, that giving grades or making lesson plans or coaching a sport may be the opportunity for Gospel? If not for this, in chapel, religious instruction and throughout the day, we have lost that ministry to which God calls the church, including its schools, that ministry for which no other institution has a call. We will—we can—serve one another, teachers and students, with attention enough that we discern the time and place in which the Gospel is the answer to the questions being asked. While there is a particular gift in the pastoral office, each of us can speak a personal word in the hall, the office, the classroom, the home visit, or after a faculty meeting.

Threatened by grades, receiving them or giving them? Your fear may be the reminder to trust not your own work, but Christ’s work for you. The task of preparing good lessons is overwhelming or boring? That may be the mirror of your condition before God, for which the life of the empty tomb is His reply.

To be sure, through Word and sacrament God proclaims His Gospel to the world and to us. But Luther will not let us go so easily: “God is surpassingly

rich in his grace: First, through the spoken word . . . second, through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren” (Smalcald Articles, III iv). This last is work for us all. When we speak with one another, the Gospel may be heard. Before, during and after the teaching of math, when the Law is met, we may say the word of grace.

Stories may illustrate the proposal of this article. A student so persistently, sharply asked about sin that finally I said, “I wonder if what we’re discussing is really your own sin. You don’t have to answer that, but I wonder if what is driving your questions is your own sinfulness.” The student’s nod opened the door to forgiveness: the answer to guilt is grace. Another student, by means of religion class and a small group, saw that turning out great work was motivated by fear, an attempt to be justified not only in class but before God. A conversation about an artistic effort turned to a more important conversation about the artist working in fear, not faith. None of these stories, regrettably, concerns primary school students or infants, but I believe the dynamics and the hearing of the Gospel could be the same, if we would but listen and minister.

It may be hard to think of this, that the halls and gyms and math classrooms

of our schools can be the sanctuaries of the proclamation of the Gospel. Sin, death, and the power of the devil would have us do any other thing instead. Our own sin is our weakness and we accuse ourselves even if no one else does.⁴ As we hear Gospel applied to our Lawful experience, this will be less hard, not just in thinking, but in doing. Indeed, the source of good works, including this proclamation of the Gospel, is not in trying harder but in hearing better. As we practice our hearing of the Gospel in the face of our lawful experience we will come to know better the speaking of it.

Integration of faith and teaching math? Is teaching math a ministry? To be sure! We serve as we equip people to live by the numbers and see their wonder. By faith we see and share the mystery of God’s working in that wonder. By God’s own work, the numbers humble us with our students, not simply in wonder but in confrontation with our sin. By God’s own work, humbled together, we may speak the word of grace to one another, the word which ends the confrontation. By justifying faith, by God’s own work, also math is ministry, the opportunity to hear the Gospel that sets us free to calculate, to serve.[†]

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Can Teaching Math Be Ministry?

1. While I will pursue teaching math in particular, you may note that the proposal of this article applies in any discipline.
2. Here I must confess my Myers-Briggs “J” and acknowledge that creativity and flexibility are also God’s work, but in the world they are still law.
3. I meet this temptation not least when I am teaching religion—the Reformation! I am so focused on the task, the topic, the end of the term that I miss the ministry with my students.
4. I can feel guilty, for example, because I don’t know more about math, even though it is not my discipline.

“I like to think that the greatest success of any life is that moment when a teacher touches a child's heart and it is never again the same. Everything America is or ever hopes to be depends upon what happens in our school's classrooms.”

Frosty Troy

“Education is the leading of human souls to what is best, and making what is best out of them, and these two objects are always attainable together, and by the same means.”

John Ruskin

Mathematics and the Trinity: Integrating the Faith across Disciplines

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Teachers in Lutheran schools are encouraged to integrate their faith across all disciplines. One way to accomplish this is to model religious concepts via the many disciplines of today's curriculum. Modeling presents excellent opportunities for teachers and students to engage in vibrant discussions whereby their faiths can grow and be strengthened within the context of sound biblical instruction. However, not all disciplines are conducive to the sharing of one's faith. Mathematics, a language of abstract symbols and operations, is not easily used to interpret and/or explain religious concepts within the Christian faith. This article offers mathematics teachers that opportunity to integrate their faith within the mathematics classroom. In particular, this article will develop a mathematical model depicting certain attributes of the Holy Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity is one area of theology that is surrounded with mysteries that we, as Christians, can not rationally explain but must accept through faith. Martin Luther believed the greatest mystery in heaven and on earth was the Doctrine of the Trinity (*Book of Concord*, p. 489). In Mark 1: 9-12, where Mark

recounts the baptism of Jesus, the reader recognizes the presence of all three persons in the Trinity: Jesus was baptized, the Father spoke to Jesus, and the Holy Spirit appeared as a dove on the head of Jesus. Christians confess this belief in the Athanasian Creed: "This is the true Christian faith, that we worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God . . . So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God." Luther writes in the *Book of Concord*, ". . . that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature, are one God who created heaven and earth. That the Father was begotten by no one, the Son was begotten by the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son" (p.291). Consequently, Scripture teaches us that the three persons within the Trinity are distinct.

With the presence of these mysterious undertones, Christians often seek external means to explain these phenomena. One common analogy of the Trinity is water and its ability to exist in three different states, i.e., liquid, solid, and gas, and yet still be water. Joanne Marxhausen (1972) in her book *Three in One*, used the common apple for her model of the Trinity. In this model the peel, flesh, and core are three distinct aspects of the same apple. Other models of the Trinity exist, but few people have considered models within the discipline of mathematics. While no perfect human

or scientific models of the Trinity exist, it is hoped that the following mathematical model will help reinforce what Christians already know: our Triune God is an almighty and wonderful, yet intricate God.

The following mathematical model requires that students have an understanding of set theory, especially within the context of the set of integers. They should have a working knowledge of the properties of sets, the cardinal number of a set (i.e., the number of elements in a set), and an understanding of infinity. Hence, this model would be most appropriately presented in any unit associated with set theory and the integers.

While the Holy Trinity has many properties and elements, the model developed in this article will concern itself only with these Lutheran beliefs:

- God has infinite magnitude, i.e., has no beginning and no end.
- The divine order of the Holy Trinity, i.e., *God the Father* is considered to be the first person within the Trinity, second is *God the Son*, and *God the Holy Spirit* is the third person.
- There are three Persons, each one God, yet there not three Gods but one God.
- All three Persons are distinct but share the same divine essence.
- All three Persons are coequal in magnitude.
- *God the Son* is begotten from the

Father while God the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

Father, the first person of the Trinity. God the Father has no beginning, no end, and has infinite magnitude.

God the Father

Let the set of integers be called **F** and represent the essence of God the Father (Figure 1).

God the Son

As stated in the Athanasian Creed, "The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created but begotten . . ."

Figure 1

$F = \{ \dots -5, -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, \dots \}$

Luther writes, "That the Father was begotten by no one, the Son was begotten by the Father . . ."

Note that this set appropriately contains the integer 1, supporting the concept that this set will represent God the Father as the first person in the Trinity. Notice also that this set has no beginning and no end, reflecting that God the Father has no beginning and no end (Rev. 21:6, John 1:1). The set **F** is said to have an infinite number of elements and is given the cardinal number of infinity which mathematicians call "aleph-null." This particular degree of infinity is assigned to infinite sets which are countable

Therefore, to show that God the Son is begotten of the Father, take the set **F** and multiply each element in **F** by two. This produces the new set **S** begotten from **F** and will represent God the Son (Figure 2).

Notice that set **S** contains the number two, but not the number one. In fact, this set contains only multiples of

Figure 2

Given the set **F**:

$F = \{ \dots -5, -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, \dots \}$

Multiply each element by two to produce the new set **S**:

$S = \{ \dots -10, -8, -6, -4, -2, 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, \dots \}$

sets. (Note: There are sets which exist and are not countable, and these sets have a different degree of infinity, for example, the irrational numbers.)

Therefore, this model identifies the set **F** as synonymous with God the

two reinforcing the appropriateness of set **S** representing the second Person of the Trinity. This set is also distinct from set **F**. Set **F** contains many elements which are not in set **S**, namely, all the odd integers. Therefore, the model suitably

reflects that these two sets are different. This clearly supports Scripture which teaches that the roles of these two Persons within the Trinity are distinct.

However, again quoting from Luther in the *Book of Concord* (p. 291), “That the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature, are one God, who created heaven and earth . . .” While **F** and **S** are clearly different sets; note that set **S** is a subset of set **F** since every element in **S** is in set **F** (i.e., $S \subseteq F$). This symbolizes that they are of the same essence and nature, i.e., have some of the same properties and characteristics.

Likewise, both sets have no beginning and no end. They also have the same number of elements, and hence have the same degree of infinity, namely “aleph-null.” To explain this the two sets can be put into a 1-1 correspondence as shown in Figure 3. Therefore, by showing that a direct 1-1 correspondence exists, mathematically, it can be said that

the mystery of the Trinity. We have two sets, **S** and **F**, both distinct sets with $S \subseteq F$, and yet both sets have the same magnitude, i.e., the same number of elements. This apparent paradox adds validity to this set structure as an appropriate model of the Trinity.

God the Holy Spirit

God the Holy Spirit, according to Luther, “. . . proceeded from the Father and the Son.” The Athanasian Creed states it this way: “The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created but proceeding.” To illustrate this concept, write the two sets **F** and **S** according to their 1-1 correspondence as done previously (Figure 3). Now create a new set, called **HS**, by adding the corresponding elements from each set. You get the new set **HS** (Figure 4). Note this new set, **HS**, contains the number three but not the numbers one and two. In fact, this set is composed of only the multiples of

Figure 3

F	=	{....	-5,	-4,	-3,	-2,	-1,	0,	1,	2,	3,	4,	5,	}
			↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	
S	=	{....	-10,	-8,	-6,	-4,	-2,	0,	2,	4,	6,	8,	10,	}

3, signifying its appropriate representation of the third Person of the Trinity. This set proceeds from both the Father and the Son as it is created

both sets must have the same number of elements. As a result both are considered countable sets and have the same degree of magnitude or infinity. Here we have a mathematical mystery, much the same as

by adding the corresponding elements within **S** and **F**.

Similar to the first two Persons within the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit is distinct from the other two. Sets **F** and

HS are not the same since the set **F** contains elements that are not in set **HS**, i.e., all the integers which are not multiples of three such as 1,2,4,5,7 etc.

use the same illustration as was done with sets **S** and **F**. Write the two sets in a 1-1 correspondence as in Figure 4.

Once again, the 1-1 correspondence

Figure 4

HS = {... -15, -12, -9, -6, -3, 0, 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, ...}

shows that the two sets have the same number of elements. This

Likewise, set **HS** and **S** are distinct. Set **HS** contains elements which are not in the set **S**, namely all the odd multiples of three such as 3, 9, 15, 21, etc. Again, this supports Scripture as it clearly teaches the distinct roles of all three Persons within the Trinity.

again appears to be a paradox. While **HS** has different elements from **F** and $\mathbf{HS} \subset \mathbf{F}$, it also has the same number of elements and therefore the same degree of infinity. Hence, the set **HS** has the same magnitude as both the sets **F** and **S**, making them coequal in magnitude.

While God the Holy Spirit is unique in His own nature, Scripture also reminds us that the Holy

Figure 5

F	=	{....	-5,	-4,	-3,	-2,	-1,	0,	1,	2,	3,	4,	5,	...,	}
			↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓		
HS	=	{....	-15,	-12,	-9,	-6,	-3,	0,	3,	6,	9,	12,	15,	...,	}

Spirit is also God just as is the Son. Note that like set **S**, the set **HS** is also a subset of **F** ($\mathbf{HS} \subset \mathbf{F}$). That is, every element of **HS** is also an element of set **F**. This illustrates that God the Holy Spirit, just like God the Son, has some of the same properties and characteristics of the God the Father and therefore is of the same divine essence and nature.

Likewise, **HS** has no beginning and no end, just like **F**. Also, both sets have the same number of elements and hence have the same degree of infinity, namely "aleph-null." To explain this, one can

According to the Athanasian Creed: "So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord. And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord. For as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge every Person by himself to be both God and Lord."

In sum, the three sets, **F**, **S**, and **HS** represent the three Persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Figure 6). Set **S** is

begotten from set **F** by multiplying each element of set **F** by two. Set **HS** proceeds from the Father and the Son in that each element in **HS** corresponds to the sum of two corresponding elements in sets **F** and **S**. All three sets have no beginning and no end. They are distinct sets, each having their own characteristics and purpose. Yet, both **S** and **HS** are subsets

classroom setting affords mathematics teachers an opportunity to discuss their faith where they are most comfortable, within the context of their own discipline. Discussion needs to follow the presentation regarding the model's appropriateness and its most certain shortcomings. Students should be encouraged to find additional ways in

which the model can be improved to further exemplify the Holy Trinity. Through this interaction, the students' and

Figure 6

F	=	{.... -5, -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ...}
S	=	{.... -10, -8, -6, -4, -2, 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, ...}
HS	=	{.... -15, -12, -9, -6, -3, 0, 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, ...}

of **F** illustrating all three sets have in common the same essence of **F**. Finally the sets **F**, **S**, and **HS** have the same degree of infinity, hence they are one being coequal in magnitude.

The presentation of this model in a

teachers' biblical beliefs are strengthened and enriched. This type of classroom activity is exactly what any exemplary Christian teacher seeks, an integration of one's faith with the world around them.†

Advancing the Ministry of New Teachers: The Summer Summits

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It is no secret of research that student teaching and first year teaching present the biggest challenges to a classroom career and the teaching ministry. Recall for a moment your first year of teaching. Notice how some experiences of that year have taken on legendary proportions: first Call and settling in, first day, encounters with students and parents, relations with colleagues. Certain events and faces have been indelibly impressed as flashbulb memories into the narrative we tell ourselves and others about early teaching, its successes, and its failures.

This first of two articles about early teaching is an inventory of several concerns, pressures, and perplexing circumstances our new teachers often face. It is based on the Summer Summit Meetings held at Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska, with teaching ministers who have completed their first or second (or even third) year in the classroom. In the Summit, new teachers find that they are not alone in the trials of the first or second year, and not extraordinary (or weird) in some of those initial feelings and impressions.¹

This is important because how new teachers

understand and interpret the experience of their early practice will shape their identity and continued practice as ministers. Assisting them to make sense of their early ministry makes good sense for those concerned about the teaching ministry. (A forthcoming article will consider ways of addressing these concerns.)

We might think that, since so many new teachers are also young, early teaching is the understandably emotional though exaggerated experience of late adolescence. Supervisors of older non-traditional and second career student teachers, however, report similar degrees of affect, both pleasant and distressing, as new teachers struggle to make the shift to the other side of the desk. While teaching is never easy, early teaching is not always heartrending. Many of us had successful and even exhilarating first years or, at least, second or third years.

Those interested in the circumstances of early teaching do well to guard against the confirmation bias of collecting only those accounts of trouble with students, parents, peers, discipline, loneliness, and other tales of woe. Yet there is an identifiable set of concerns that most new teachers face.

This inventory of concerns is a typical collection culled at the Summits from both formal and informal reports from teachers who have finished their first, second, and third year. The new teacher struggles with the mechanics of organization, mastering content, pacing,

and planning. Much of the challenge also occurs because those who return to the classroom as teachers are often those who both liked school and were successful in it. What they find upon return with their now-intact adult perspective-taking ability is that many students, for a perplexing number of reasons, do not share their appreciation for school.

The complex human puzzle of the classroom is a daunting situation, especially for the novice who must learn about motivation, assimilation, human relations with many different stakeholders, and orchestrating instruction and classroom management into some sort of ministry of God's promises. The usual result for the new teacher is personal overload. Some manage it quite well. Most of us struggle.

An Inventory

I tell my student teachers that no one part of teaching is very complicated. That's what makes it look easy, as though anyone who has been in a classroom as a student can simply walk back in and perform as a teacher. What's difficult about excellent teaching is coordinating all the parts simultaneously and sequentially with several other active decision-makers in the room *and* moving the whole process to some meaningful outcome.

The same is true for the challenges of beginning a teaching ministry and,

thus, for this inventory. No single part of the early teaching experience is remarkable in itself. Rather, it is the composite of several tasks, attitudes, and on-going series of personal and professional decisions that must combine to make for good teaching and an effective ministry. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), a psychologist at the University of Chicago, describes the optimum coordination of on-task peak ability as “flow.” Athletes sometimes describe this peak performance as being in “the zone.”

Yet beyond any task or specific performance, Paul in Philippians 4:12-13, describes the composite of a life and ministry dedicated to God’s larger purposes: “I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” Paul, of course, was already twenty-five years into his ministry when he sent this assurance—“I know . . . I have learned . . . I can . . .”—to the Philippians. Like many of us,

his first years of teaching were plagued with problems.

Consider ten of the stressors and obstacles regularly identified by our new teachers in the Summer Summit, and consider if and how these are addressed at your site.

1. The Call Process

Even before arriving on site, approximately half of our new teachers have already experienced significant

anxiety trying to negotiate the designated call process “decently and in order.” Recent graduate Karl found himself (with the assistance of his placement director) trying to coordinate the interests and requests for designation of four different calling bodies. His greatest frustration came

The complex human puzzle of the classroom is a daunting situation, especially for the novice who must learn about motivation, assimilation, human relations with many different stakeholders, and orchestrating instruction and classroom management into some sort of ministry of God’s promises. The usual result for the new teacher is personal overload.

in trying not to treat the process as a job search by comparing the apparent temporal benefits of one position against another. His anxiety increased when he had to coordinate the calendars of the several call committees and delicately delay requests for designation until he

had addressed all of the parties.

“I know this was a divine Call,” Karl concluded, “but at times it felt more like being a free agent in the major leagues.” The call process continues to be an experience that provokes uncertainty rather than assurance for many teachers about their entrance to ministry.

2. The First Day

Beginning the school year well is important both for the impression it makes on students, especially middle school and high school students, and for the impression it leaves with the first year teacher. Student teaching does not prepare the new teacher to begin a school year because the student teacher walks into a classroom already under way. First year teachers have not yet made any beginning, good or bad, and they may or may not know about good beginnings. But many of them comment on the confusion and frustration of working through that first day and week. A shaky start to the year, though not always crucial, makes for a shaky start to a ministry.

3. A Parent Primer

New teachers have had enough developmental psychology and student teaching to begin with a working understanding of students. Except for some of the second career teachers, however, they do not know much about parents or family dynamics. One of the best young teachers I know recently gave

an end-of-year social studies group assignment that required hours of outside work for tenth graders—and imposed serious transportation problems for some of the parents. Most of us had to learn about parents and families in the school of hard knocks. It seems we should have learned enough by now to systematically pass on a little of that wisdom to our younger colleagues.

4. Figuring Out the Institution

The new teacher graduate has recently spent several years learning how to function as an independent agent in a large institution, successful at having figured out how to do what one pleases while satisfying the perfunctory requirements of rather detached professors and officials. They have also been told to prepare for personal ministry but have experienced a call process that tends to reinforce their independent agency. They find the shift to the very different institution of a school refreshing but challenging, and this is a hot topic at the Summit.

Collaboration and mutuality are not performance requirements in college, but they are essential in the school. The new teachers I talk to appreciate this but often find expectations hard to decipher and their new institution more a puzzle than a system. They report that the orientation they receive (if any) is a blur of information out of any meaningful context. When available, mentors sometimes help, but not always.

5. "The Administration!"

None of the Summit issues receives such varied reactions as does the role of administrators. The range of responses comes from both the young and the second career teachers (though the second career teachers have a broader experience against which to gauge their administrative colleagues). The range seems to reflect the several styles of leadership exhibited by administrators. Servant leaders and authoritative leaders (strong in both support and structure) receive consistently high praise.

Two kinds of administrators prompt new teachers to consider leaving the teaching ministry or taking a call. One is the administrator who subordinates the well-being of teachers to the pressure of parents, the seniority of peers, or the smooth functioning of the organization. The other is the authoritarian who is high in control and low in personal and professional support. The perspectives and reactions from new teachers largely confirm the literature on leadership over the past ten years.

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6. Personal Finances

An annual survey of teacher education students at Concordia, Seward, has indicated that they will graduate with an average indebtedness of over \$18,000. While this number can be interpreted in a variety of ways (it is common for people to finance cars for much more than this amount; or, it is nearly equivalent to a new Lutheran teacher's annual salary), the figure represents a hefty monthly

payment for the former student who recently had all meals prepared in the college dining hall. They often express the need for assistance in understanding cash flow, credit, savings, and taxes. One new teacher didn't realize until the middle of his second year that he had to set aside and make self-employed tax payments. The IRS was not

sympathetic. Finances can be mysterious and threatening to the new teacher.

7. Teachers College Re-visited

Some things about teaching can be learned at teachers college, but other things cannot. The basics of lesson and unit planning can be learned. Discipline

intervention skills cannot. A proper theoretical distinction between Law and Gospel can be learned. Assessing the spiritual condition of the sinner cannot. After reciting a litany of things they should have learned or should have been taught before entering their own classrooms, Summit participants begin to recognize the limits of readiness in college and the difference between what they were prepared to assimilate as inexperienced undergraduates and what must be acquired through the experience of the reflective practitioner.

The maxim, “We only really know what we practice,” applies here, and *new* teachers become *good* teachers by reviewing, re-learning, and re-teaching themselves many of the skills and concepts only introduced to them in their training. What’s more, the skill of ministry and rightly handling the Word of truth (II Tim. 2:15) can only be developed on the job given the readiness of a right heart and the encouragement of already skilled and practiced colleagues.

8. How’m I Doing?

For all the talk of assessment, teachers, including new teachers, are not much observed and evaluated. The Summit participants note this lack of attention as a concern. They are confident enough to believe that they are competent entry-level professionals, and they desire rather than dread review of their performance from others.

As they express it, evaluation would

provide three services for them. First, it would assist in improvement of skills and procedures, saving them from having to discover what others have learned before them. Second, a constructive evaluation would signal them that their contribution to the school is recognized and appreciated, not leaving them to wonder where they stand. This second purpose is especially helpful for those teachers with non-tenured calls. Third, observation and conferences with the observer would enable them to practice some self-assessment toward revision and planning for the next year.

9. A Plan

We tend to do what we know and what we’ve done before despite how clumsy that approach may have been, provided it got us through. New teachers tend to vacillate between the poles of leaving teaching and the intensity of its demands (“I can’t go through that again!”) and a blind faith that next year will somehow be better (“because now I know what it’s like”). The middle way of review and planning doesn’t seem to come naturally toward the end of a school year. Perhaps this is because a collective instinct to get to summer overtakes both students and teachers long about May.

Whatever the reason, new teachers who return to their classrooms may replicate rather than revise last year’s efforts unless they are assisted and encouraged to do otherwise. The Summit

helps participants review the previous year, anticipate their load of responsibilities, and devise a plan of how their next year can be different.

10. Recalling One's Call

Beginning a career or making a career change is a severe test of identity.

Those doing high school ministry find this especially so since they work with

adolescents whose

life task is to test

their own and everyone else's identity. Early

teaching often follows a script of

self-incriminating questions: Do I

really know what I'm doing? Am I

up to the demands

of teaching? Will the roller coaster of

classroom life ever smooth out? Am I

actually helping

anybody? Is this

what God wants me to be doing?

Contending with this identity and

career crisis typically leads the new

teacher to one of three resolutions:

attrition, school teaching, or the teaching

ministry. Those who don't leave the

classroom may resort to the

conventionalities of teaching subjects,

coaching extracurriculars, and enjoying

students. But they can, instead,

Those who don't leave the classroom may resort to the conventionalities of teaching subjects, coaching extra-curriculars, and enjoying students. But they can, instead, encounter the richer possibility of Christian community in the conditions and challenges of pursuing what Bonhoeffer called "life together."

encounter the richer possibility of Christian community in the conditions and challenges of pursuing what Bonhoeffer called "life together."

Their Call papers extended and defined their Call from God through the calling body. That Call then gets worked out with fear and trembling in the crucible of daily opportunities afforded by God. The first few years of teaching

are critical for confirming a Call to *ministry* of both service and Word as distinct from *school teaching*. New teachers are already steeped in an outlook of career-as-occupation (which a growing amount of language and practice in the church reinforces) rather than a life of *ministry*. They are also taught and inclined to locate

competence in themselves as confirmation of their vocation.

Perhaps the central issue of identity for the new teacher is the relocation of their confidence where Paul found his years before writing his encouragement to the Philippians. In an earlier letter to the Corinthians, he wrote:

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your

hearts, to be known and read by all men. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit, for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life. (II Cor. 3:2-6)

Ministry Formation

A few years ago teacher education devoted considerable attention to first year teachers. This activity was given the catchall title of “induction year programming,” which came in a variety of flavors but reduced to two types: on-site mentoring or extended support from the teachers college. These programs were motivated by the dual concern for professional attrition (estimated at six percent per year in public education and ten percent per year in private education) and professional mediocrity (harder to measure but a matter of alarums and excursions for many blue ribbon committees) (U. S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993-944).

Our concern as Lutheran educators

for first year teachers does not discount attrition or mediocrity, but we do have the additional, different, and larger agenda of ministry formation. The first few years of our teaching are critical for shaping the kind of ministry we will do. The initial patterns of how we perceive our students as disciples of Jesus, our classrooms and schools as archetypes of Christian community, and our teaching as the work of God’s kingdom are set in our early years of ministry.

There is much we don’t know about the whys and wherefores of today’s new teaching ministers. Certainly some of these have changed since those of us in mid-career or near retirement entered our first classrooms. What has not changed is God’s promise to accomplish the work of His kingdom, including that work through and among us. Meanwhile as participants in that kingdom, we do know some ways to address some of the concerns that new teachers have identified. We know some points of intervention in assisting those joining us in this work, and some strategies to help them advance their ministry. These strategies will be the focus of a second article based on the activities of the Summer Summits for second and third year teachers.†

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1. From 1994 through 1996 a series of "Summer Summits" was conducted on the campus of Concordia College, Seward, NE, for new Lutheran teachers who had completed their first, second, or third year of teaching. Most of the participants were secondary teachers, though some were middle school and elementary teachers. These summits were an extension of the Caleb Project, which sponsors two-day conferences joining student teachers with veteran teaching ministers and publishes the *Caleb Comment*. The summits provided assistance in evangelism, apologetics, classroom management, and ministry formation for new teaching ministers. Based on the success of that pilot series, a new series of summits is being planned beginning in 1999.

Keeping the Faith

Sherry Prange has fifteen years of teaching experience in Lutheran schools in California, Missouri, Colorado, and Illinois. She earned an M.A. in Administration from Concordia University, River Forest and has recently accepted a call to be the administrator of Christ Our Savior Lutheran High School, opening in Evansville, IL in the fall of 1999. She has been published previously in Lutheran Education and has had four chapel talks published in the LCMS "Chapel Talks 1998-1999."

This school stinks! I can't wait 'til I'm outta here!

These were words I heard often during Josh's eighth grade year — words I didn't want to hear, words that made me feel I had failed him.

Josh was an example of a boy who couldn't wait to grow up. His older brother was a sophomore in high school and very successful. He played on the football team and was president of his class. He had a winning smile, a pleasant attitude, and the willingness to work hard to get what he wanted.

Josh never was well liked or totally accepted in grade school, so he anticipated that when he got to high school, things would be better. Lots of girls from the public school already hung around him at ball games and his brother's friends already called him by name.

How does a teacher touch the life of a student who is biding his time? What ultimately will register with someone who sits in class waiting for each day to move him one step closer to graduation? How does a teacher weave together the academic and the spiritual to touch the world in which a child lives?

Our school day starts, as at so many Lutheran schools, with the pastor coming in to teach

confirmation. One thing I discovered teaching seventh and eighth graders is that when the pastor leaves, students never discuss anything they have learned. The following represent ways I bring faith into our discussions and our lives outside formal religion class.

Get students to talk about their faith.

After the pastor leaves my classroom in the morning, “religion” is finished in the minds of many students. Therefore, I sometimes ask the entire class or individual students what they are learning in confirmation. In general, knowledge is shared, but any conversation about how that knowledge is a part of their life is non-existent. Follow up questions include, “Where do you think you will ever use that information?” or “What is the most helpful thing you have learned this week?” “How does that comfort you?” Their answers give me insight into the reality of their faith walk. This is information that will be helpful as I deal with situations that arise throughout the school year.

Pray for insight, and then look for ways throughout the day to use

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examples from the Bible.

In English class we were studying irregular verbs. Instinctively, students know how to use the past and past participle forms correctly, at least most of the time. However, language usage varies in different parts of the country. For example, having lived in six states and two foreign countries, I know that Coca Cola is called “pop.” Yet you would never convince the people where I now live that the word is pop because it is “soda” to them.

In the same way, their thinking told them that their teacher certainly couldn’t know what she was talking about when I tried to explain the difference between

the words “lend” and “loan.” Lend is a verb and loan is a noun, but students have never heard the word lend used.

“Loan me a book.”

“Loan me a pencil.”

In my classroom, students became argumentative, so any more time spent would no longer be productive. I

decided to move their minds a new direction. I asked, “Do you know that God tells us we are to lend and not expect anything back?”

Suddenly the whole argument was forgotten because this new idea seemed

too preposterous to be true. They certainly knew that usage of the word lend would mean that the item in question is being borrowed. This created an opportunity to talk once more about how God's ways are not the ways of the world and how He calls us to act differently.

Challenge them to be thinkers concerning spiritual things.

While the pastor was teaching confirmation in my classroom, I taught religion to fifth and sixth graders. I worked to help students develop a geographical perspective of their stories. As we talked about Jonah, we found Tarshish and Joppa on the map.

One day I told students that this was an interdisciplinary approach. One student asked what that meant and I explained I was teaching geography as we studied maps and I was teaching math as we figured the distance between the two places, all in religion class.

That word "Interdisciplinary" caught on like fire. Over and over, as I taught the fifth and sixth graders their religion or English, students would comment, "Oh, this is interdisciplinary." They were so proud of themselves for learning such a big word, and I was proud of them for learning the concept.

It is an easy step, then, in spelling (or any other) class to ask students to use their interdisciplinary skills and give me some ways we can bring religion into spelling, or into any other subject. Once they begin thinking, it is an easy bridge to ask how their faith can be brought into

classroom relationships or into their relationships with their family. As students develop their own ideas, they are much more likely to remember them.

Spend the time it takes to resolve interpersonal problems, and make sure that God is part of the process.

A group of eighth grade girls were fighting and one of the moms told me about it. Her daughter was being picked on.

One noon recess I asked all the girls to come into my classroom. I told them what I knew of the problem and told them we were going to work it out. I acted as moderator and required that everyone listen without interruption until the person speaking was finished. Everyone would have an opportunity to speak as many times as they wished until they no longer had anything else to say.

During that 45-minute session, stories about divorce that previous summer and interrelationship problems surfaced. I helped the girls place themselves into one another's shoes. We began that session and ended it with prayer. Every student listened as I brought the message of what God wants from us in terms of how we get along with each other (a word of law). As words of forgiveness were shared (Gospel), the whole atmosphere became more positive. In fact, much to my amazement, the seventh and eighth grade boys asked if they could have a session like that the next day.

That was the most productive 45 minutes of the year. Many parents talked

with me later about how relationships improved that eighth grade year and how it turned out to be their very best year.

Take time to know your students because this provides opportunity for spiritual applications.

As I grow older, I see so much that is accomplished through prayer. We must pray for our students on a regular basis. We must pray God will provide opportunities for us to get to know them because, on our own, we are so pressed for time that it is easy not to take time for learning personal things about our students.

Let me close by returning to Josh and an example of what it has meant to “get to know” him. The last few months of school, I found out that Josh would go to the local high school after our school day was over and work out so that he could be part of the football team next year. As we talked in science about muscles and developing stamina, I shared that I knew Josh was developing stamina as he trained at the high school for football next year. Josh related one of his exercises, so I drew a picture of it on the board and we talked about how many seconds he had cut off his time in just three weeks. I was attempting to use what I had learned about him to hold him up as a positive role model, since that was not something

that happened very often in Josh’s life.

Later, he questioned spiritual things with me. I provided school time for him to be able to go over and talk with the pastor.

Two weeks before school was out, Josh came to me and told me that the problems he had recently had with his eyes had caused him to become legally blind. At the end of the day, we always have prayer requests included. I sometimes include requests for my family

or for some problem of which I am aware. Knowing that it would be very unlikely that a child would ask for prayer for Josh, I explained to the class what had happened to

Josh’s eyesight in only two weeks and I asked them to pray for him, not just today but all summer long.

Ultimately, who knows if any of the things I tried to do will be remembered or make any real difference in Josh’s life?

All we can do is to be faithful to what God calls us to do — to love our neighbor (especially those ornery students) as ourselves. That includes praying for them when they continue to try our patience. It means demonstrating before others that we value them and their contribution to the classroom. It also means continuously learning new ways of being more effective—both through seeking God’s guidance and

All we can do is to be faithful to what God calls us to do — to love our neighbor (especially those ornery students) as ourselves.

Keeping the Faith

through learning new pedagogical approaches.

When we are reminded of our failures, as I often was through Josh's words to me, we need to do two things. First, we must ask for forgiveness, both from God and from the student we have offended. Yes, there were times when I knew that Josh was just arguing for the sake of argument. It is easy to remember those times and use them as an excuse for not really listening or apologizing at another point in time when I was, indeed, wrong. Asking for forgiveness models my faith to Josh and the children I teach.

The second necessary element when feeling like a failure is to cling to God's

promise that His Word will not return void. Over the year we share God's Words in many situations and in many ways. Many students benefit. Josh left my room with no visible evidence on the outside that God had changed his life in any way. It is the Joshs of the world that keep us humble and clinging to God.

As we flee to God for His gracious forgiveness, we can thank Him for setting our minds free from guilt. He is not eager to throw our failures in our face. Instead, He desires to share how much He loves us, and He encourages us to run the full race. As we think of our students, God comes to us and says, "Go and do likewise." †

Concordia Publishing House (CPH) will offer its popular "Writing for the Church" workshops this summer. A workshop at Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne (July 18-24, 1999) will be staffed by Dr. Earl Gaulke and Dr. Rodney Rathman, Editor of Day/Weekday School materials. A second workshop at Concordia University, Irvine, CA, will be staffed by Dr. Gaulke and Dr. Thomas Doyle, Dean of Christ College and Editor of CPH Materials for Adult Education.

Workshop objectives include helping participants to recognize the need for effective written communication in the church and by the church for the world, develop creative writing and editing skills through regular practice, and commit themselves to witnessing through the written word as they communicate the Good News of grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Areas to be covered include the writing of religion lesson materials for all levels and agencies of Christian education, news articles, devotional literature, family and children's literature, and audio and video scripts.

To attend the workshop in Ft. Wayne, mail your application directly to: Writing for the Church Workshop, Dr. William Weinrich, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 N. Clinton Street, Ft. Wayne, IN 46825. To attend the workshop in Irvine, mail your application directly to: Writing for the Church Workshop, Joanna Fowler, Concordia University, 1530 Concordia West, Irvine, CA 92612. Each workshop is limited to 20 participants.

God's Care in Time of Crisis: The School's Response

Richard Armstrong, Senior Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg, FL, is a Pastoral Counselor-in-Training with the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. He currently chairs the Florida-Georgia District Care Commission. Anna Eissfeldt, M.A., a licensed school psychologist, serves three Lutheran schools in the St. Petersburg area. Carrie Weiss, M.A., a licensed marriage and family therapist, directs the Christian Counseling Center at Our Savior Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg, FL.

It was Monday morning. You had a lot of things on your mind before school started: your students, lesson plans, the mid-week field trip, even the coming weekend to be away with your family. Still, you had a good over-all feeling that today would be one of those days you enjoyed being a teacher. You were glad you had chosen to lead God's children into new, exciting places. You enjoyed enriching their lives.

It was Monday morning. Cars lined up in front of the school, parents dropping off their children. It looked normal enough. Only a few parents seemed anxious, running late for work.

It all just seemed to happen so quickly, unexpectedly. A gap appeared in the car line. Maybe the driver who didn't move forward was daydreaming. Suddenly he realized he was holding everyone up. And Jamie Schultz, maybe she was daydreaming, thinking about the fun weekend at the beach with good friends. Daydreaming happens for third-graders. Then the unthinkable happened . . . Jamie stepped . . . the car jumped forward.

If she hadn't been close to the concrete curb, maybe

the ground or the asphalt would have been a softer place for her head to land . . . maybe the injury wouldn't have been so severe . . . maybe it wouldn't have been fatal. The whole incident was full of "what ifs" and "maybes." People ran to pick up Jamie. But the blood from her nose, the lack of breathing or pulse, brought sudden and shocking reality to all.

For the next few minutes, everything else was a blur . . . call 911 . . . move the rest of the students to the classrooms . . . move the car line along . . . contact the principal . . . have her parents already left? . . . is Pastor here?

It was the beginning of the day, and many students witnessed what happened. They all knew Jamie. She was just that kind of kid. It was going to be one of those days that you remembered, and gave thanks for being a teacher . . .

The sudden death of any individual, either by natural causes or by accident, is traumatic for family and friends. The sudden death of a student is traumatic for the entire school/congregational community. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* defines crisis as "a separating, . . . a crucial time, the turning point when something must soon terminate or suffer a material change. The outcome decides whether a possible bad consequence will follow."

From the Scriptures We Learn—

After Jesus was crucified, His

followers were in crisis. They had no power to stop the terrible events of the previous week. Their expectations of how life would be for them, and for Jesus, ended. Fear, disappointment and confusion left them without direction; sheep without a Shepherd. His followers were wounded people in need of healing. Jesus could have taken the position: "I told them how things would be, and that's the way things are! Perhaps they will understand and heal in time." He could have, but that is not what He did. When He came back, he healed - tenderly, lovingly. The gospel accounts tell us of the times Jesus ministered to his followers in person. These times are models for us as we work with hurting children. Listening, being with, explaining, showing, giving directions; Jesus is the champion of the powerless. When Jesus met the people in Galilee, He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and then, ascended into heaven. We are told His people worshiped and then returned to Jerusalem with real joy. We often enter into a child's life after an ending—a death, a divorce, a crisis event of some nature that results in an ending of trust and an ending of self-confidence. However, we can make that ending a beginning, a healthful turning point of faith in that child's life.

Most of us would like to ignore the crises around us, preferring to dream those difficulties will not invade our particular world. When tragedies, dysfunction, and violence do intrude,

peace and simple dreams are suddenly destroyed. When the chaotic aftermath brings pain, suffering, and tears, we are reminded that we are still part of a sin-filled world. We are reminded that even children are not spared trauma and the ensuing feelings of loss and pain.

This reality brings special burdens to those who are responsible for the care and direction of children.

It is a fact: A crisis will happen at your school. Yes, even at a Lutheran school! Research indicates that schools typically respond to a crisis in one of three ways:

- **Ignore It**—The staff hopes the crisis will just go away if they do not talk about it or if they silently deny that there is, in fact, a crisis;
- **React Spontaneously**—Each person does his/her best, but there is no plan in place; or,
- **Activate a Plan**—The school has a plan and the team works together to meet the needs of children, parents, and staff.

Which School Is Yours?

As Christian educators, our faith, compassion, and professionalism

intertwine in times of crisis. We desire to exemplify the love of Jesus by helping to heal those who are hurting. This is our call—to have professional wisdom so that we may minister to our school community in times of suffering and chaos.

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The key to an effective crisis response is a crisis preparation plan which includes these five steps:

1. Prepare a building plan: what does your church or school need to change or adjust to meet a crisis situation?
2. Develop a system to meet the school's immediate communication needs:
 - A signal for staff and students to stay inside the building or room;
 - A signal for staff and students to return to the building;
 - A signal to fall to the ground in the event of a tornado or sniper attack;
 - A plan for communicating with the media.
3. Develop a flowchart of responsibilities. Who is in charge and of what?
4. Educate the staff in classroom crisis

God's Care in Times of Crisis

intervention strategies. These strategies help provide a structure to support students, staff, and families following a crisis.

5. Study church and school policies and procedures. Know your basic legal responsibilities in a crisis situation.

Since each crisis is different, school principals and crisis teams to handle each situation in the way that best meets the needs of each school. The program is written from the perspective that the principal is the key person in developing and implementing the procedures and actions to be taken in times of crises. The following objectives will serve crisis teams as an overall guide in clarifying their responses to the needs of the school community. The team strives to:

- reduce pain, suffering, or rumor;
- facilitate Christian growth among school personnel, students, and parents by appropriately handling fear of death, grief, guilt, or anger;
- minimize disruption of daily school routines;
- cooperate with media and avoid over-reaction or hysteria;
- develop crisis intervention skills through training;
- review and update the school plan annually;
- remain positive and committed to Christ's love and support, especially in crisis situations;
- remain flexible and ready to listen;
- advocate for encouraging students

and the staff to express their emotions following a crisis situation;

- develop a strong prayer life and sense of joint commitment and trust as a team.

A crisis team is a group of people (staff and/or volunteers), designated by the school, who are trained in crisis response methods. The team stands ready to help and support the school community or an individual meet a crisis situation. Crisis team members are people who are flexible, have the ability to think clearly under stress; work together cooperatively, and anticipate consequence;, and are familiar with the church, school, students, and community. They have a commitment to their faith in Christ's love and compassion, a positive outlook on growth, and a willingness to listen and serve people under stress. Team members train together to respond to crisis needs. They learn to recognize a crisis as an event that is likely to:

- interrupt normal routine and escalate in intensity;
- draw attention to the school and jeopardize it's image;
- interfere with the students' and staff's ability to focus on learning.

Service on the team is voluntary, commissioned by the congregation, and recognized as a position that requires significant extra time and emotional obligation. Each school and congregation determines, prior to a crisis,

the team make-up, roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority.

The composition of the crisis team (usually 4-8 persons) is determined by each school, but the following staff members and/or roles are recommended: principal, senior pastor, principal's designee, media liaison, and faculty members from selected departments. Advisory or ad-hoc team members might include the school counselor, school nurse, a community-relations police officer, and other community personnel.

Recently, a young student in a Lutheran school accidentally shot herself in the basement of her home. When her father found her body, he called 911, saying, "I need help!

My daughter shot herself!" That 911 call was played over the local nightly TV news broadcast. The reporters raised questions about the intentional aspects of the accident. The next morning reporters were at the school. They asked more questions of teachers, administrators, and students concerning the death of this little

girl. Fortunately a crisis trainer had provided the principal with suggestions on how to respond to the media. The principal then gave the media a positive

story on how the school would provide Christian care for the family and the little girl's friends and classmates. The principal was made aware of his right and responsibility to restrict the media to certain areas on campus and to allow reporters to talk only to certain people as appropriate and legal. He was able to respond to this crisis situation in an intentional manner with a confident attitude of Christian care and concern for all involved.

"God's Care in Times of Crisis": A Training Program

"God's Care in Times of Crisis" is written from a Christian perspective, to support people of faith as they prepare for and respond to crises in Christian schools. The trainers have a commitment to help school personnel put their faith into action when in a crisis. They believe training in crisis preparation and response is vital for every

As Christian educators, our faith, compassion, and professionalism intertwine in times of crisis. We desire to exemplify the love of Jesus by helping to heal those who are hurting. This is our call—to have professional wisdom so that we may minister to our school community in times of suffering and chaos.

Christian school. "God's Care In Times Of Crisis" personnel have trained school crisis teams in the Florida-Georgia and Missouri Districts of the Lutheran

God's Care in Times of Crisis

Church- Missouri Synod. The Wheat Ridge Foundation has encouraged this work through a three year grant to help train schools throughout the United States.

The initial project began because the mothers of three students in one small Lutheran school died in one school year. The staff was hurting and feeling ill-prepared to support their students and families. A committed member of a Lutheran parish and the Community Foundation of Greater Tampa provided the resources to develop the manual and training program.

The authors of "God's Care in Times of Crisis" offer a two-day training event

for school crisis teams. At this workshop the team receives a copy of the 208 page manual *God's Care in Times of Crisis*. The team works on team building, role definition, chain of command, crisis plan checklist, building preparation, understanding reactions to crisis, crisis scenarios, and much more.

For more information on God's Care in Times of Crisis, or other related workshops, contact the Rev. Rick Armstrong (Program Coordinator), Grace Lutheran Church and School, St. Petersburg, FL (813/527-1168) or the Rev. Richard Eissfeldt (Administrative Coordinator - 813/347-7276).†

"What's all this running around after happiness? Why don't we just do something constructive, something creative, and then if that makes us happy, fine. If it doesn't, at least we still have tilled the garden, baked the bread, taken care of somebody or written the book."

Toni Morrison

The Emotionally Literate Principal

“Speak when you’re angry and you’ll make the best speech you’ll ever regret.” (Laurence Peter)

The ability of an administrator to function effectively depends less on intelligence than it does on ability to channel emotions appropriately. Each of us has two minds, the one that thinks and the one that feels. While the rational mind has been the one most measured over the years and the one thought of as the predictor of future success, it is the emotional mind on which the effectiveness of administrators most depends. “At best, IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80 percent to other forces” (Goleman, 1995, p. 34).

In his beautifully written book *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (1995) describes the importance for leaders of directing their emotions in ways that bring about favorable results.

Imagine the benefits for work of being skilled in the basic emotional competencies — being attuned to the feelings of those we deal with, being able to handle disagreements so they do not escalate, having the ability to get into flow states while doing our work. Leadership is not domination but the art of persuading people to work toward a common goal. And, in terms of managing our own careers, there may be nothing more essential than recognizing our deepest feelings about what we do — and what changes might make us more truly satisfied with our work (Goleman, 1995, p. 149).

A leader with a high degree of emotional intelligence understands himself and the effects his actions have on those around him. He is able to motivate himself and keep going when faced with frustrations. He is able to control his impulses and regulate his moods. He knows how to handle feelings like fear, anger, and sadness. He takes on responsibilities and accepts the consequences for his actions.

The emotionally intelligent principal is able to help teachers improve their instructional ability by building them up, not tearing them down. He is able to exchange ideas and offer suggestions in ways that assure the teacher that the two of them are working together toward solutions. He knows how to be a good listener. He knows how to assert himself without anger or attempts to dominate.

Emotionally intelligent leaders are sensitive. They are attuned to the impact their words and actions have on others. They realize how others are feeling and are able to take the perspective of others. They understand the motivating forces behind the feelings and

actions of others. They respect the differences in people.

Emotionally literate leaders know that inappropriately-worded criticism can be devastating to the recipient. An artful critique focuses on what the teacher has done and can do, not on the character of the teacher. When people begin to feel that their failures are due to some unchangeable deficiency within them, they lose hope and stop trying. A good critique is specific. It identifies a key problem or pattern that needs to be corrected. A good administrator suggests ways to work toward solutions to the problems (Goleman, 1995, pp. 153-154).

A good administrator is able to delay gratification. He is able resist the desire for immediate satisfaction so that a greater satisfaction or achievement can be reached at a later time. Goleman relates the results of a study done by Walter Mischel in the 1960s. Four-year-old children were told by a researcher that they could either have a marshmallow right away, or if they waited until the researcher returned in about fifteen or twenty minutes, they could have two marshmallows. Some of the four-year-olds were able to delay their gratification. Others gave in to the impulse of eating the marshmallow immediately. Many years later these same children were tracked as adolescents. The results were striking. Those who were able to delay their gratification at the age of four were, a dozen years later, more socially competent, more self-reliant, more dependable, and better able to cope with life's frustrations. And they were still

more able to delay their gratification in pursuit of higher goals. Interestingly, those same students were again studied as they finished high school. The children who had been able to delay their gratification at the age of four turned out to be academically superior students (Goleman, 1995, pp. 81-82). The ability to deny impulses in the search for something greater is an important part of emotional intelligence.

Similarly, emotionally intelligent administrators are able to delay their need for immediate gratification. They resist the impulse to deal in anger with a staff member, to utter words which will later be regretted. They realize that the passage of time can often help them deal more objectively with an aggravating situation. In other words, they've learned the importance of counting to ten when angry rather than reacting immediately.

They are able to avoid the impulse to "take it easy" when continued work will allow them to attain worthwhile goals for the school. They are doers, not couch potatoes.

Emotionally intelligent leaders have faith in God. They are able to endure the struggles of life with a constancy borne out of lifetime of trust in Jesus Christ. They realize that the Lord is working through them to do His work. They see Him helping them to understand the hardest subject of all: themselves.†

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A Place in the Choir

An important part of the musical life of any Lutheran school, be it elementary, high school, or university, is the choral program. Apart from the school itself, there is no other organization which so integrates pure arts education into the realm of spiritual and worship life.

All God's children do, as the song says, have a place *in* the choir. But to assure that the place is a fulfilling one we need to examine the current role and the very future *of* the choir. Sharing his insights on that topic will be Dr. Kurt Amolsch, Associate Professor of Music at Concordia University, River Forest. Dr. Amolsch served as a professor of music at Concordia, Ann Arbor for 14 years, and for four of those years was director of the college choral programs. He has served as director of the university choral programs at Concordia, River Forest for the past six years.

SW: Every academic year brings a new crop of students who wish to sing in one of the University choirs. Have you noticed any changes in the skills that entering students are bringing with them?

KA: Yes, I think it is fair to say that there have been significant changes over time. I would say that fewer people are singing. Many college students have just never sung. Also, there seems to be a great division between those students who come in with a terrific background, and those who can sing but have no understanding or background. Those from good backgrounds come with great expectations for their college experience. They can be disappointed because smaller colleges like our own must create choirs containing a mixture of highly educated singers, and those with good voices but very limited background.

SW: Through participation and music festivals and through observation of student teachers you have opportunity to see many grade school programs. Could you share what you have observed?

KA: I would have to say that singing in Lutheran schools is in a state of decline. At one time every Lutheran teacher student would have had musical training in college for teaching music in the classroom. This is no longer the case. In addition, Lutheran teachers often have too many other responsibilities to tend to the business of creating a really good children's choir. There are a few places where musicians really understand how to get children to sing, but there are not enough of them. I also believe that in the past, children were more likely to be exposed to quality music of a variety of types. I am an advocate of

exploring diverse musical styles (and that does include contemporary Christian music), but I find that in any given school children often sing only one type of music and thus have far too narrow a background. Children's voices are also too often misused through strident oversinging.

SW: I was fortunate to have a principal and faculty who fully supported the choir program both with adequate funding and rehearsal time. I suspect that most choir teachers do not have this luxury. If you were in the position of convincing a staff or school board of the importance of choral education, what would you say to them?

KA: This is a basic, vital issue which needs to be discussed plainly. Music is essential to the curriculum of any school — especially a Lutheran school. Making music, appreciating music, knowing about music is just as important as learning reading or math. All of us know the current research linking the development of young children, musical training, and intelligence. Additionally, the participation of young children in worship is a crucial part of their spiritual formation. Children who sing the psalms or lead the Kyrie will realize that their involvement in church music is important and meaningful, and we would hope that their sense of purpose will grow as they mature and become the next generation of Christians.

SW: We are not doing a good job of retaining male singers. This must affect choirs at the college level,

and may prove fatal for church choral programs. Is there any solution to this problem?

KA: I would start by saying that boys' voices are beginning to change much earlier — at age 11 or 12 rather than in high school. Often, rather than grappling with the problem, music teachers simply allow boys to drop out. We need to educate teachers about changing voices, and perhaps be willing to lose the unison treble sound. I would like to see more male teachers sing with their students, so that boys will realize that it's OK for men to sing.

SW: Give us some basic goals for creating better singers. If you could wave a magic wand over every first-year student who auditioned for a choir at a Lutheran college next year, what basic skills and attitudes would you give them?

- KA: 1. Music literacy, both in sight-singing and in a basic knowledge of musical forms and structures.
2. Piano lessons.
3. Exposure to a varied choral repertoire of good quality.
4. The ability to listen to, describe, and evaluate musical performance.
5. Curiosity, flexibility, and self-discipline.

We wish to thank Dr. Amolsch for his thoughts. We all need to work at improving our choral programs and our personal skills as choral teachers. For our calling is not merely to teach a piece of music for one day's performance but to prepare children for a lifetime of musical participation in the church.†

Gender Inclusiveness – Don't Get Stung by this Buzzword

What does gender-inclusiveness have to do with God's Holy Word? What happens when a translator comes across a word in the Bible that has no obvious counterpart in the new language? Who keeps translators accountable for converting language as accurately as possible, and who decides what is most accurate?

These large questions jostled my mind as I read an article called "Bible Translators Deny Gender Agenda" (LeBlanc, 1997). After reviewing more sources, I discovered a few answers — not to the questions above, but to related ones: What is gender inclusiveness? Who are some of the prominent voices speaking out on the issue of gender inclusiveness in Scripture? What stand does our Synod take? Finally, why is it important for Lutheran educators to stay updated and informed on Bible translations?

What Is Gender Inclusiveness?

In general, inclusive language refers to systematic use of *neutral* (not male, not female) nouns and pronouns. All readers are able to identify with such language because it addresses males and females simultaneously.

Prominent Voices on Gender Inclusiveness

Grant Osborne, professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, and member of the translation team for the New Living Translation, holds that gender inclusive translations are more accurate and that their language is clearer than non-inclusive translations (Grudem, 1997).

Wayne Grudem (1997), also a professor at the Trinity, acknowledges that inclusive language can increase accuracy and understanding in the Bible. He argues, however, that "there are many other changes that should cause evangelicals much concern." He gives examples of inclusive-favoring revisions that he believes actually change the meaning of the text.

Nelson/Word Publishing Group, as represented by President Byron Williamson, believes that the inclusive version of the Odyssey Bible is accurate, and that the issues are more about culture. Word Publishing, however, has stopped printing this Bible in response to pressure from Dr. James Dobson (LeBlanc, 1997).

Dr. Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, lobbied against

a gender inclusive New International Version (NIV). He also held a conference regarding gender specific language in Scripture to which he invited seven inclusive-language opponents and four NIV translators. This group wrote 13 controversial “Guidelines for Translation of Gender-related Language in Scripture.” The guidelines asked translators to refer to God with masculine pronouns, to use “man” to represent both men and women, not to change singular tense to plural, and to identify Christian family members by their current label (for example, “brothers” should not be changed to brothers and sisters)(LeBlanc, 1997).

Mark Taylor, president and CEO of Tyndale House Publishers, was more than disappointed with the guidelines written by Dobson’s group. Taylor was surprised that some of the men at the convention would be party to such a strict position on inclusive language. Tyndale House has rights to the New Living Translation, which uses some inclusive language (LeBlanc, 1997).

The LC-MS on Inclusive Language

Our Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) issued a report in February 1998 entitled “Biblical Revelation and Inclusive Language.” The Commission created a panel of five women and one man to read its drafts and give feedback. Their report contained the following directives when considering inclusive language in Bible translation:

1. Each person of the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is most

accurately represented with masculine nouns and pronouns.

2. Singulars should not become plurals and third person should not become second person.
3. God’s people as Israel and as the church retain a feminine image, the bride of Christ.
4. In some cases, it is appropriate to use “brothers and sisters” in place of “brothers” or “people” in place of “men” (CTCR).

Why Stay Informed?

Christ instructs His disciples, “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16 NIV). Jesus’ words to His disciples are also for us. We must be sharp and informed, teaching God’s Word accurately and holding our teaching resources, from curriculum to lyrical songs, up against this same illuminating Truth.

Dewey Beegle (1960) assures us that translators believe they are doing their best to remain true to the original texts of the Bible. There are good reasons for revising the Word of God as we have it, and Beegle lists five of them:

1. Scholars discover more accurate texts in Greek and Hebrew.
2. The English language continually changes.
3. People ask for wording that is easy to understand.
4. Scholars find new information to better define Biblical terms.
5. Biblical scholars suggest improvements in passage

interpretation (p. 2).

These reasons are motivating publishers to require gender-neutral language in new translations of the Bible. This pressure in itself is not corrupt; it is a result of changing culture. The integrity of the translators' response to the pressure is what matters. The issue is not so much using neutral or specific language as it is translating as closely as possible the original text, word for word.

Grudem illustrates how inclusive language can improve the rendering of the text. In the Revised Standard Version (RSV), John 12:32 reads "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." The NRSV says, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Since the Greek text used a gender-neutral word for men, this is a positive revision and keeps the original meaning intact (Grudem, 1997).

Another example from the same article shows the danger posed by emphasizing gender-inclusiveness whenever possible. In the RSV, 1 Cor. 15:21 reads "As by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead." This verse refers to the first Adam, a natural man, and the second Adam, Christ our Savior. The masculinity of these two Adams is

removed when the NRSV says, "Since death came through a human being the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being." The Contemporary English Version and the New International Version Inclusive (only available in England) also omit the word "man" (Grudem, 1997). Does it matter that Christ was a man instead of a woman? Yes. And so it matters that he is called a man in Scripture, just as in the original texts.

Christians must stay sharp on matters of God's Word and be prepared when a student or colleague asks a question about gender inclusiveness in Scripture.

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Ups and Downs

We all have “ups and downs” in life. The key to a positive Christ-lifestyle is to celebrate the “ups” with others and be comforted and supported by others when we are “down.”

Listen to the “ups and downs” phrases around us each day: “Lift up.” “Wake up.” “Wait up.” “I’ll clean up.” “Let me stay up.” “What’s up?” And also listen to the “down” phrases around you: “Calm down.” “Slow down.” “Sit down.” “Put that down.”

A healthy exercise is to keep track of your “up and down” phrases for the next few days. Are you emphasizing your “ups” in life or are you majoring in your “downs?” We all have them. They are called Good Fridays and Easters. They are called bad days and good days. They are called bad relationships and good relationships.

Another good exercise is to think through the question, “Who or what pushes you down?” And “Who or what lifts you up?” And to go one step further, “Whom do you put down?” and “Whom do you lift up?” in your daily life.

Ups and downs are as common as highs and lows, yes and nos, lightness and darkness, Good Fridays and Easters. So often “down”-type phrases tend to infirm people. In contrast, “up”-type phrases tend to affirm people. Are you feeling like an “up” person right now, or are you on one of your “downs” in life?

The Good News that we share as God’s “up” people is that the world could not keep a “good man down.” That is, Christ Jesus hit the bottom for us on the cross and lifts us up through faith and hope by being lifted up on the cross for us. The Good News is *not* that we are in charge of keeping ourselves and others on an upward trend. If that were the case, it certainly would be our downfall! Instead, the truth of the matter is that it is God in Christ who provides the lifting power in our lives and through us into the lives of others to bring an up-beat style of living to us each day.

Watch for all the “up” phrases in the Scriptures. We continue to be affirmed through Christ as we see the Lord lifting us up, raising us up, picking us up, pulling us up, filling us up, and enabling us to reach up and out to others. Check out the words of Acts 27:25, where Paul says, “So keep up your courage,” or Luke 4:11 where we are told that the angels will “lift you up,” or James 5:15 where we hear once again that “the Lord will raise Him up.” The Lord certainly does “lift us up on eagle’s wings.”

So “what’s up” in your life? Christ has raised us up from the downs of death. So celebrate up! Have a great “up day” in the Lord, as we look up, lift up, link up, and lighten up!†

Multiplying Ministries

by Rich Bimler

Learning Strategies: The Flip Side of Instructional Strategies

How often have educators heard the complaint that the learners teachers are responsible for teaching are ill-equipped to handle the rigors of that which the educator would like to do in his or her classroom? If you listen carefully to these complaints, the specifics are usually missing. Is it lack of prior knowledge, skills, or a poor attitude? Or could it be all three?

Educational researchers have spent much of the last half of the century attempting to find answers to the continuing problem of students who are “behind” or seem to lack the motivational drive to “catch up” or “keep up” with expectations. The cries of college professors concerning their students’ perceived lack of necessary prior knowledge have become especially loud and accusations of “dumbed-down curricula” have been leveled at mandatory levels of formal education. Yes, even in Lutheran education, where articulation between levels of education, individualized attention for students, and attention to the affective domain of learning are often considered with pride, we still hear the same complaints as in previous decades.

As we close the twentieth century, schools continue to operate with the same formula with which we entered the twentieth century, 2 X 4 X 6 X 9 X 12 (two covers to every book, four walls to every classroom, six periods or time frames per day, nine months of school per year, and twelve levels of school required to terminate mandatory education). Elementary teachers still focus on developmental skills and the term readiness permeates primary and early childhood educational jargon. Middle school teachers focus on socialization skills, assuming these are concentrations that could ensure success at the next level. Yet high school teachers still assume their primary function is to “select” those who continue for advanced study by presenting content to be absorbed by students. As a result of these assumption-based practices, and despite enormous expense by governing agencies and efforts by educators and parents, 25% of students continue to drop out of school before completing high school (Johnson, Dupuis, Musial, & Hall, 1994). In addition, less than 50% of students entering college complete a four-year degree.

I would challenge Lutheran educators to use the fruits of what they have learned about learning and learning strategies to begin to conquer the pervasive problem of students progressing at all levels of education while failing to learn how to learn. For many years

research and theorizing about teaching centered almost exclusively on the teacher, teaching outcomes, teaching processes, and teaching materials. Student variables were merely the dependent measures in educational research. The effects of teaching variables, both individually and in combination on student achievement were examined. As a result, good teaching practices were assumed to be universals that did not depend on individual differences among students or on teaching students to think and to learn (McKeatchie et al., 1994).

Because of the cognitive revolution during the past generation, we now know that the interaction of good instructional practices with students strategic learning practices and skills results in positive learning outcomes. As a result educational psychologists now tend to focus on understanding how learners select, process, structure in memory, and recall for later use, incoming information.

The focus on cognition, has changed our general conception of the teaching/ learning process in several ways. Instead of viewing the learner as passively recording the stimuli that the teacher presents, learning is viewed as an active process which the learner can influence (McCormick & Pressley, 1996). Instead of viewing the outcome of learning as depending primarily on what the teacher presents, the outcome of learning now is supposed to depend jointly on what information is presented and on how the learner processes that information (Weinstein, 1985). We may now begin

to suggest that the effects of instruction depend partly on what a learner knows prior to the learning experience, what a learner thinks about before, during, and after a learning activity, and what type of personal context the learner generates for a learning activity (Weinstein, 1985).

Our students need content with which to build new understandings, but not only the content disseminated by the teacher. Students need cognitive knowledge and skill practice in how to acquire more knowledge later and new knowledge on their own. Researchers' work on understanding the impact of learning strategies has resulted in the conclusion that a growing number of diverse competencies are helpful for effective and continued learning, organization, and retention of information. An effective learning strategy can now be defined as a set of processes or steps that can facilitate the acquisition, storage, and utilization of information. Claire Weinstein (1985) further postulates that the goal of any particular learning strategy may be to affect the learners motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge.

Few would disagree that knowledge is central to teaching students how to learn. Researchers are finding, though, that content instruction should be consistently linked with instruction in how to learn that content. Furthermore, the research is beginning to indicate that the most effective and efficient means by which this can occur is by teachers modeling learning strategies while

presenting content. Important schemata, models and metaphors, and modes of investigation can be explicitly taught and reinforced while the teacher models various skills, processes, and other dimensions of strategic learning

The goal of instruction in content areas is for students to integrate the knowledge into their existing store of ideas and structures of knowledge. This implies that students should process new knowledge in ways that are meaningful and useful to them as individuals. Teachers can directly impact students' self-control and responsibility for that control in the classroom by modeling and teaching learning strategies with the content they present. When teachers provide opportunities for students practice learning strategies while learning new but similar content, students can and will alter their personal attitude toward learning. Students will develop a measure of commitment and attention through introspection and successful practice, thereby greatly diminishing the notion of the teacher as dominating authority figure or disciplinarian and enhancing the establishment of a positive relationship with learning rather than a negative one.

If a primary goal of formal education is the development of lifelong independent learners, providing a knowledge base, a repertoire of skills with which to acquire, rehearse, select, and organize this information, and the opportunities to practice these skills with positive reinforcement must be an essential part of every school's

curriculum (Omstein, et al, 1995).

It is my fervent prayer that Lutheran schools enter the twenty-first century with the idea that we can be on the cutting edge of education because as Christians we are used to being "models" or "mentors." In reality it's part of our mission. We simply need to be more creatively focused, innovative, and purposeful in developing the necessary learning skills. Our Lord and Savior, the Master Teacher, has provided the models and Word. The Holy Spirit will take care of the rest.†

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Can Children Play?

What makes it possible for children to play? Why is play important? We have all heard the truism that play is the child's work. Play is the way that young children learn. That's an important value of play. But that's not all.

Zechariah 8:5 describes the radical difference peace will make in the lives of people, especially of children: "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets." Children need peace in order to be able to play. In the sense in which Zechariah is using the metaphor of play, peace is not simply quiet. It is the absence of fear. In both Zechariah 8:5 and Isaiah 11:6-9, the Holy Spirit is telling us that peace and absence from fear are needed for children to grow, develop, and learn.

How possible is play in your classroom? How involved in play are children encouraged to become? "What does this have to do with peace and an absence from fear?" you ask. "Lots," I answer.

For children to become engaged in play to the point that their activity becomes a learning experience that impacts brain connections and development, that play activity needs to be engrossing. Children need to get lost in their play in order for that play to make a difference. Play that is superficial isn't true play. Rather, it's "playing" at play!

Research is now telling us that brain development is most enhanced when children are involved in activities they find engaging and engrossing. Research also tells us that children's ability to be engaged and engrossed is best developed in an environment of nurturing relationships and emotional safety.

Isn't that what Zechariah and Isaiah were talking about 2,500 years ago? These ideas of peace and safety are not that different from ideas of nurturing relationships and emotional safety. Let's consider each of these concepts in terms of your work with young children.

Peace

What does peace mean in your classroom? What does it look like? How do you know you are fostering peace for the children with whom you work or whose lives you impact?

Peace certainly means the absence of fear. It means that children know they are respected and loved. It means they know that the environment of the classroom has been designed so that they can be engaged in activities with appropriate independence.

Peace means children know they can interact with others with freedom. Peace means children know they have the teacher's encouragement to try new ideas and activities without fear of

judgement or ridicule.

Nurturing Relationships

Children need to know they are important. They need to know they are loved. They need to know they are respected by the adults in their lives. They need to know that their ideas matter to the adults who matter to them.

Relationships that nurture young children and support their learning are respectful relationships. These relationships are free of ridicule, free of suspicion. Nurturing relationships are evidenced by the trust and acceptance teachers and caregivers convey in their day-to-day, minute-to-minute interactions with children.

Children need to know they are loved and accepted. They need to know that their ideas are respected, that their questions will be answered in ways they can understand. They need to know that the adults in their lives truly care about them as *people*.

Safety

Both Isaiah and Zechariah are using play and the activities of children as a metaphor for safety. But what does that mean for children today? What difference does safety make?

If children are worried about their safety, especially their physical safety, they have no energy left for much else. Their attention is riveted on keeping bad things from happening to them or to those around them. There is little energy left, then, for the work of play. There is little energy left for learning.

While children's physical safety is

important, their emotional safety is also critical. Children not only need to *be* safe, they need to *feel* safe. They need the assurance and the feeling of being cared for. They need to feel that their best interests are being attended to. They need to feel that their perspective and their needs are important to the adults responsible for their care and learning.

Emotional safety is important for healthy and optimal brain development. Emotional health is not just a mental health issue but a learning issue. We need to make sure that children feel protected and cared for so that they can devote their energy to learning and growing, not protecting themselves.

Play in the Streets

Zechariah uses play in the streets as a metaphor for peace. But it's not just a metaphor. Play is a measure of the safety of any community, school, or child care center. Do the children play? Do they engage in activities for the sheer joy of it? Do they get involved in interactive play which stretches their social competence?

How safe is it for children to play in the streets where you are? In most communities, children must be monitored every moment when they are outside, a far cry from the days of parenting my own children more than 30 years ago.

Since most neighborhoods are not safe for children's play, it is increasingly important that time and space for unstructured play are available to young children in schools and child care centers. What are you doing to make sure that children really *can* play? †

Simple Gifts

As I get around and try to listen carefully to what's on the hearts and minds of Lutheran educators these days, one concern emerges again and again: relationships with parents. From issues with parents who seemingly want no engagement with their child's schooling ("that's what we're paying you to do") to those with parents who come across as ready to second-guess every move the teacher makes, the great partnership between home and school appears badly frayed in all too many settings. The real problem is, of course, that the child comes out the loser.

One common point of friction is over how to deal with the "gifted" child. The direction of the concern usually lies with a parent who believes that the school is not sufficiently challenging the child, or is not allowing the child to progress at his/her own pace. Beyond that, the details and approaches taken are as varied as the individuals and institutions involved. Some schools create special classes for those who meet some standard measure of "giftedness." Others have "pull-out" programs in particular subjects (or, in multi-grade situations like the venerable one-room school, simply allow the child to study appropriate subjects at a higher grade level). Others take the position that all children are gifted, only in different ways, so that students should be kept together at grade level and encouraged to work collaboratively, sometimes giving and sometimes receiving help.

One of the glories of American education is the diversity of ways in which teachers, administrators, and schools seek to meet student needs. Lutheran schools represent a shining example of such diversity, both as a group and among themselves. It is therefore not my present purpose to suggest a single approach to serving the needs of gifted children. What I do propose is a perspective which might help both parents and teachers understand this phenomenon in a way which might help all concerned.

The suggested perspective is simply this: *that gifted children be seen as those who have received specific and special gifts from God.* Their extraordinary capabilities, then, are to be seen less as attributes or qualifications which set them apart from their peers than as treasures granted for the sake of us all, to be nurtured and nourished for the common good. Like all graces, academic gifts are "undeserved favor." As such, these gifts can be placed in context with the munificence of a gracious God, and viewed specifically as means by which God would make more broadly known and accepted his gifts to all the world in creation and redemption. Gifted children are neither to be exalted above others nor pressed toward the mean. Like all children, they are to be received as individuals for whom Christ died and then challenged to live lives of faithful stewardship of all their gifts.†

A Final Word
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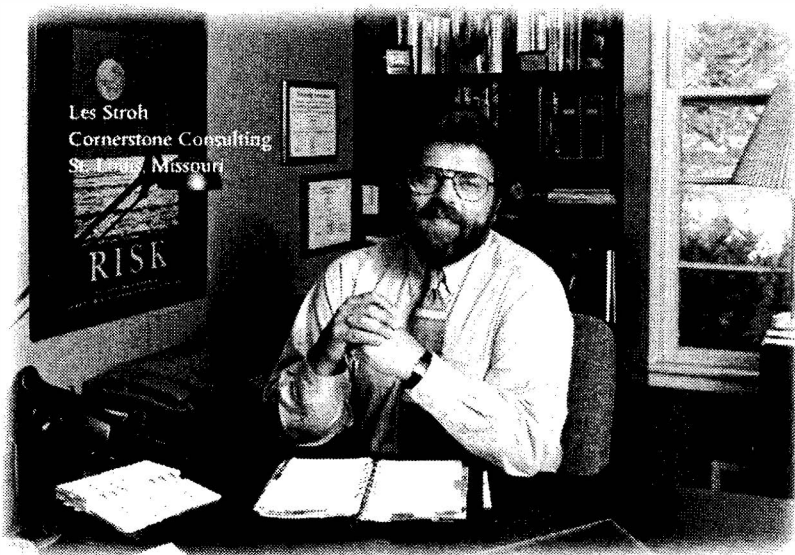
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